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R U F U S

OR

THE RED KING

A ROMANCE

"He feared God but little—*man* not at all."

WILLIAM OF MALMSBURY.

James G. Grant

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. III

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RUFUS.

CHAPTER I.

“ ——— A violent altercation ensued, and the King, in the height of his passion, addressing himself to the Constable, exclaimed, ‘ Sir Earl, by God, you shall either *go* or *hang* !’ — ‘ By God, Sir King,’ replied Hereford, ‘ I will neither go nor hang !’ and he immediately departed with above thirty other considerable Barons.”

Hume's History of England.

“ ‘ Who made thee Count ?’ demanded Hugh Capet of a refractory Noble, ‘ The same right that made thee King,’ was the bold reply.”

Crowe's History of France.

“ Having formed a scheme for checking the growing power of the nobles, Robert Bruce summoned them to appear, and shew by what rights they held their lands. Being assembled, and the question put, they started up at once and drew their swords—‘ By *these*,’ said they, ‘ we acquired our lands, and with these we will defend them !’ This, notwithstanding Robert’s popular and splendid virtues, occasioned a dangerous conspiracy against his life.”

Robertson's History of Scotland.

VOL. III.

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FIVE days after the events narrated in our last, Robert de Mowbray was proclaimed a traitor at the cross of Winchester, his title and government annulled, and all his possessions confiscated to the crown. This blow, however, even from the hand of a powerful monarch, was not always of instant avail against the spirit indicated in our mottos, the stubborn genius of feudal aristocracy.

Upon the sixth morning, Alberic du Coci burst suddenly, and with streaming brow and flashing eyes, into the presence of the King and Flambard,

"News, mighty Sovereign!" he exclaimed, hurrying to the royal foot, and flinging himself upon one knee, almost breathless with haste and excitement.

"News? thou son of a Flemish harlot!" said the King. "*What* news, Brazen-brow? they should be passing good, in amends of thy saucy bluntness!"

"Pardon, my gracious Liege," returned the vassal, "hot love forgets cold form. My news are passing *evil*, if your Grace stir not with the fairer speed for their telling. The arch-rebel, De Mowbray, is up and doing with a mighty power in the North! He hath spread banner at York, at Durham, at Alnwick, and at Bambo-

rough; and, at the four gates of each, with voice of herald and blast of trumpet, proclaimed Stephen de Albemarle, King of England."

Rufus bounded from his seat.

"Oh, spacious villain!" he cried, "Oh, mighty traitor! hath he but *one* head? *one* life? King, saidst thou? Oh, monstrous Rebel! hast thou a dog, Du Coci, that would lap Earl's blood, ha?"

"Better, my Liege," said the Knight, "a sword to shed it for your Grace, if it be God's pleasure; but, by my faith, there will lack ten thousand besides, and sharp and true ones. Stephen himself——"

"Ho! what of *him*?" shouted the Monarch—"what of our traitor-cousin, in Hell's name?—what of the doubly-damned De Albemarle?"

"Sped to De Mowbray," answered Sir Alberic; "some say at York—some further south; but, all agree, with a vast strength, levied in the mid-land shires as he trooped north. Their numbers, or equipment, or what traitor-names have joined them, as leaders or as allies, God knows, my Sovereign Liege, not I."

"Why! we will march and see! What recks it? ho! summon De Miles! where sleeps Montgomery in this pinch? Get *thee* to bed, good Ranulph; no market now for thy politic wares."

“Tush—tush, my Liege—fairer than ever,” said Flambard; “wit is sharper than steel, and shall yet be at higher price. Hark, Du Coci, where didst *thou*, of all men, basket up these tidings?”

“Further north,” replied Sir Alberic, “than I have knowledge of tower and town to tell ye. I have been scouring in bootless quest of one that fiends, surely, have snatched from earth, and met, by the way, with those who had fast knowledge that this is sooth; the rather, that they themselves were hot upon the spur to join King Stephen—I pray Heaven and your Grace to pardon me the word.”

“Oh, gracious fool!” cried Rufus, “to let hence his prating daughter and her champion! Thou wert right, Ranulph—it is they that have carried the lit torch to this pile of treason! He waited but for *them*—ha!”

“He had waited long, then, my Liege,” said Du Coci, “for well do I believe that they have never yet crossed Ouse or Trent. Sleepers in strange beds they, I warrant them, since the night of the forest-tourney. If *one*, indeed, be not pillowed in Abraham’s bosom, as priests say.”

“Dally not with riddling words, for thy soul!” exclaimed the King. “What knowest thou of De Mowbray’s squire and daughter?”

"Nought of the first," replied the Knight, "save that he bled and swooned, and, anon, vanished, as though the earth that drank his blood, had devoured his body also. But, for the maiden, I beseech your Grace, bid Reginald de Lacy say, what panting thing of cries and shrieks and struggles cumbered *his* saddle four nights agone, in the forest northward hence."

"Ha!" exclaimed the King.

"As the devil willed it," continued Du Coci, "there were deep waters running betwixt us, or, child as she is of my worst foe, I had marred his racing with the lovely burden."

* "Black-bearded villain!" said Rufus. "His head shall answer it. What! nothing but tricks of treason? Whither away, my Lord Justiciary?"

"To summon aid and council, I," said Flam-bard, "and that with such speed as horse, and herald, and trumpet-call can do it. By God, my Liege, we must have gold! if it be dug for in men's hearts, where, as I live and breathe, I think the greedy villains hide it from us in these pinches. For what with these accursed Welsh wars; and your Grace's over-sea doings; and building huge halls and castles, and fair dwellings, forsooth, for lurdane priests and joul-

headed friars ; and granting boons to all askers ; and giving largesses as though your exchequer were a heaped mountain ; I can tell ye, Sir King, monies have grown rarer with us here in Winchester than unicorn's horns."

And, thus saying, the Procurator Fiscal vanished from the chamber.

"Command me, mighty Sovereign," said Du Coci, "whither must *I* the whilst this storm is brewing?"

"Northward," said Rufus, "as though a legion of fiends drove thee ! or, by my Father's soul ! lacking De Waleric for their fence, our towers of Monkchester-on-Tyne will fall into the Rebel's hands."

"Past prayer, my Liege," replied the Knight, "for, if the black truth must out, they are already stormed and taken."

The Monarch stamped with a fury that shook the oaken chamber, and filled it with the dust of the strewed rushes. Fortunately, however, the sudden entrance of Montgomery and De Miles, whom the Justiciary had opportunely met in the castle-hall, broke upon his idle paroxysms. Immediately all were in their element. There was sparkling of fierce eyes ; grasping of hands ; swearing of bitter oaths ; and rapid suggestion

of measures better fitted for wreaking the royal anger than frantic words and gestures.

"For thy life, Du Coci," said Flambard, "ride thou with the Lord Marshal's hests, whither he bids, and see that twenty pursuivants-at-arms (less may not serve), be here in tabard and in saddle within an hour. Our writs to every Sheriff in the realm must fly with their best wings; or towns and towers beyond the Trent will fall to the rebels by the round score, ere we have power a-foot to strike a stroke!"

"Write then, good Ranulph," said the King, "Dispatch—dispatch! Bid the stout Sheriffs ride day and night, and summon all 'twixt sixty and sixteen. If they slumber or tarry,—fire-brand and battle-axe for that! God's curse upon the sleepy villains that lost our Castle-upon-Tyne! aye, and on *thee*, Du Coci, if thou amend not the evil chance with speed. Away! we will take thought to give thee needful force."

Sir Alberic hurried from the chamber. De Tunbridge and a few other of the higher crown-vassals, joined the royal military conclave; and, on the other hand, the Chamberlain, the Chancellor, and the Treasurer were summoned in aid of the toiling Flambard, whose active mind had already determined upon a hundred measures.

We pass to the *Great Council*, which, by the hour of noon, was assembled with a fulness that crowded even that vast hall to excess. Every Baron that the festival had drawn to Winchester, lay and spiritual, was there. No man caring or daring to be absent after a summons so peremptory. Instantly as the Monarch assumed his throne, a herald, upon the Marshal's right hand, blew three times a warning trumpet-note of proclamation; and then, another, upon the left, stepping a little in advance, announced in a loud voice the rebellion of De Mowbray and De Albemarle. A mixed sound of surprise and execration rose and swelled on every side; but, when the King, starting to his feet, demanded "What comfort and what counsel his loyal lieges gave him in such straits?" every lay-baron present, except *two*, followed the example of Montgomery and De Miles, who, suddenly, drawing their heavy swords, and waving them aloft, swore a deep oath, that "with those and their good lances alone they would give comfort and counsel to their Sovereign!"

"I go, my Liege," said the Marshal, "to fling abroad the first of a thousand banners; but, were ten lances the full muster of your battle against the high traitor, De Mowbray, one of the

ten were I! So help me God and his liege-saint, St. George!"

"And I!" exclaimed the Constable.

"And I!" echoed De Tunbridge.

"And I!" broke in full concert from the assemblage; followed by a shout of acclamation which seemed to ring and vibrate along the bannered walls, and the carved roof-work of the hall.

"Now, by St. Luke's face! these are sounds for a King's ear and a King's heart; aye, and a King's thanks, were he the best and strongest that ever yet was bearded by rebellion! Thanks, therefore, my loyal and right-trusty lieges! But, look!—" he added, pointing to the *two* whom we have already alluded to as exceptions—"Even in this goodly quiver there are broken shafts. Marshal of England, ask yonder Knights, if such they be, why they, and they alone, fling scorn upon our presence with shut lips, sheathed brands, and scowling brows? scorn upon us, we say, and every token of others fealty. Bid them make answer, on their lives."

There was a dead silence, as Rufus—his eye kindling, though he retained his seat, continued to point alternately to the objects of his resentment; whom the general enthusiasm, indeed,

now placed in strong and ungracious contrast with all around.

Montgomery strode midway between the parties malecontent ; but they did not wait to be formally challenged.

“ Marshal of England,” said Hugh-le-Loup, his voice hoarse and tremulous with passion, “ ask yonder King and his Justiciary, if it be sooth, that, at the banquet of yester-even, whither nor I nor mine were bidden guests, the hand and dowry of Maud de Aquila, *my* kinswoman and ward, were gaged, by a royal oath, as price and guerdon for De Mowbray’s head, struck off by whatsoever hand ? Ask this and give me answer.”

The words were scarcely uttered before Reginald de Lacy, upon *his* part also, confronted the Earl of Shrewsbury, and began with a like haughty formula.

“ Marshal of England, ask yonder King and his Justiciary, if it be sooth, that, in the list of towns in Normandy, marked out for grinding levies of men and arms—or, failing these, of such scutage-tax as would drain every coffer within their walls—*my* town of Mans be also written down ? *mine* by the self-same right that seats his father’s son upon yon throne of England. Ask this, and give me answer.”

The audacity of these questions seemed literally to suspend the breath of all who heard. But the spirit of the Conqueror had boiled up in William Rufus.

“ Now by the Mother of Heaven !” he exclaimed, starting to his feet, “ I am answered ! and will *make answer*, were it the first and the last time that ever a true King answered a false traitor !—”

“ Traitor !” cried Hugh-le-Loup, turning fiercely upon the Sovereign, “ Thy father, Sir King, thy mightier and more kingly father, had other speech and other bearing for one who was of the first and strongest to buckle mail, and scatter treasure, that a poor feudatory Duke might be transmewted into a free Monarch. But let pass. Sword nor treasure of mine shall out till I be answered touching this banquet boast. Is’t sooth or not ?”

The King, who, it is said, for the first time in his life, looked *white* with passion instead of *red*, strode up to the offended and offending Earl, and, with a glare which Lupus hardly sustained, replied from between his grinding teeth :—

“ SOOTH, thou audacious villain ! sooth as Heaven ! Art answered ? ha ? Why, we have pampered thee with gifts and favour till pride and swollen surquedry gorge thee to cracking !

But, know, thou full-fed banqueter upon the fruits of mine and my dead father's largesse, that I will yet work my pleasure with thee for good or evil; aye, as the potter with his clay, mould thee to what I list; and *where*, and *when*; thee, and thine earldom; treasure, and sword and life; thy gross body—" he added, scornfully, "and *thy fair kinswoman!* gnash fangs at *that*, Sir Wolf! For, as I live and breathe, the daughter of De Aquila is no more ward of thine than she is Queen of Heaven."

Rage and insulted pride seemed to dilate even the full portly dimensions of Hugh Vras.

"Now, afore God and his holy saints!" he exclaimed, "from the crown of thy head downward, and from the sole of thy foot upward, William of England! thou art, past thought and speech, a matchless tyrant! if it stand *thus* with Maud de Aquila"

"If!" vociferated the King, stamping furiously—"sound trumpets yet again!"

And, as the heralds obeyed, he strode heavily upon the steps of the throne, but without seating himself—then—as the peal of the horn died away—

"*Here*," he continued, "though tampering with rebellion hath barred thee from our ban-

quets, *here*, at least, thou art a guest, bidden or unbidden ; and here let thy own ears warn thee. Mark ! He that shall bring the traitor De Mowbray's head,—hacked off, or still upon the rebel trunk, it recks not ;—now, by my sceptre and my soul ! on *Him* (be he the meanest horse-boy of our camp !) on *him* will I bestow this vaunted beauty, this Maud de Aquila ; for wife, for slave, for strumpet, or what not, even as his pleasure is ! she, and her every knight's-fee, manor and tower, forest and field. Our Lord Justiciary, and thou, Earl Marshal, look that a herald-at-arms make proclamation thus, at every market cross and city gate."

The Earl of Chester struck with both hands clenched upon a brow literally black with contending passions ; and it seemed to all present as if the violence of his emotions must find speedy vent, either in execrations or tears. A struggle, fearful while it lasted, gave him mastery over both. Pacing slowly, but with little firmness, through the hall, he passed the King, the Marshal, and the Justiciary, and, taking from his baldric the sword which we have elsewhere said was given to him by the Conqueror, delivered it, without a word, into the hand of De Miles. As the constable received

it with reluctant awkwardness, Lupus pointed to the inscription upon the blade, "*Hugo comes Cestria*," and then, with shaken finger, to the chafed Rufus, whose burning eye followed the gesture, well understanding it as a tacit renunciation of allegiance upon the Earl's part.

The latter, with recovered firmness of step, but looking deadly pale, then made for the hall door, saying to the Barons who thronged between,—

"I pray you let me pass;—this hall grows hot."

"Wouldst cool thee *in the North*;" said Rufus, "ha, Cousin Earl?"

"My Lord of Chester," said Flambard, speaking now for the first time, "is cousin also to De Albemarle; look well, my Liege, to *that*. If choice between be question of *near blood*, a sparrow's feather will turn the scale."

"Hell-born and bred!" exclaimed the Earl, "mine is indeed the blood of kings, and dost *thou*, mean, undescended caitiff! dare to lift finger or wag tongue against me?"

"Not,—"
replied the sneering Favourite, as he held before him the intercepted letter from De Mowbray, and pointed, insultingly, to the bitter passage—" *if thou canst leave turning and*

changing, and blowing hot and cold with the same breath, and looking now backward, now forward—' ha ? mighty Earl !—"

The hand of Lupus was upon his dagger ; but so also was the hand of another upon *him*, and a voice murmured, "Not *yet*, nor *here*—be calm."

He "*looked daggers*, but used none," and again moved for the door.

"Tarry," said the King, "and take again thy sword. Aye, and an oath upon its cross-hilt, under the beards of these holy bishops and abbots, that thou wilt meet us, in five days, with all thy power, levied both west and east of Offa's Dyke.—"

The Earl indeed took back the sword, but it was only to throw it upon the lowest step of the throne ; "I will meet thee, Cousin King," he said equivocally, "*with all my power.*"

"Attach him of high treason ;" said the Justiciary, and the Marshal passed between Lupus and the door, but did not lay hand upon him, nor repeat the words of arrest ; for there was that in the eyes of every Baron near, which admonished forbearance. The Earl of Chester, indeed, could draw no assurance or countenance from his own baronage of the Palatinate ; the GREAT COUNCIL being formed exclusively of Crown-

tenants ; but many of these had known him for a munificent friend, and shared the princely hospitality of Chester Castle. His cause, too, especially against the hated Flambard, was that of the whole body of English Nobles, who, however loyally determined to support Rufus himself through the rebellion, were far from willing that the hand of regal prerogative should lie heavy upon one individual of their order.

De Lacy, for some minutes forgotten, now resumed *his* part in the scene.

“ Milo de Miles,” he said, apart to the Constable, “ and thou, Ilbert de Tunbridge, and Ralph de Guader, thou,—shall it be thus ? Ye were once neither as chidden babes nor beaten hounds, but men and knights—ye were not wont to cog and fawn upon this ban-dog of a Justiciary ! and will ye *now* cheer him to the throat of a Norman noble ; him, that, if long unmuzzled, will at last strike his practised fangs into the bosoms of ye all ? ”

Blunt-witted as the Constable was, he felt the appeal. “ My Liege,” he said aloud, “ this wound craves staunching ; and not that your Justiciary should rend it wider. I, for one, will fight against De Mowbray while I have blood to shed, or flesh to hack ; but these quillets of *law*—these mat-

ters of wardship, and of heirship, that stir your Grace against Hugh Lupus—these are targets beyond my archery ; and, by holy Saint Mary ! Sir Justiciary,” (turning abruptly to Flambard,) “plainly, and at a word, I will back ye therein neither with sword nor speech.”

There was a distinct buzz of approbation after this candid avowal. Some did not scruple to say aloud, “It is well said, noble Milo ; by Mary-mother, we are like-minded with the good Constable !” and there were grim smiles of satisfaction upon almost every face.

“I, also, my Liege,” said Montgomery, willing enough to go with the stream, in spite of the “*et tu Brute*” glance of Rufus, “I also crave that this storm be overblown. Hugh Lupus is mine enemy ; but so God help me, as I will not crush him with the hand of office till he be traitor manifest ! If there be any amongst these noble peers whom I offend by this, let them pronounce, and I will bow me to their censure.”

But there was not a single gainsaying voice.

Flambard, who, during all this, had placed one foot upon the lowest step of the throne, now murmured in the King’s ear, “Let pass, my Liege, and be the shame on me.” Then, aloud, “Pardon, great King ; very hardly did

I look for rebuke at your Grace's hand, nor that the voice of all your lieges should thus be surety for Hugh Lupus' faith; I pray God, their pledges be redeemed! and touching the hot words of arrest your Grace reproves me for, I say but as it is written, (if these holy bishops be well remembered,) 'The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up.'"

He stretched his arm towards the Marshal, who, in his turn, waved for free passage to the Earl of Chester. All fell back with alacrity, to mark their triumph over the Minister; and, with a measured step, without a single word of parting reverence, Hugh-le-Loup quitted the royal hall.

CHAPTER II.

“ Up Willy ! waur them a’ man ! ”

Old Scotch Song.

DE LACY’s single head was now bare to the royal fury ; but he took assurance from the impunity of Lupus. The Monarch too, politic even in extreme passion, and conscious of the weakness of his prerogative against the indomitable spirit of his nobles, thus leagued in defence of their common rights, shunned the mortification of apparent defeat, by assuming a new character. He exchanged his high tone of kingly resentment for the bold indifference and sarcastic levity which distinguished him in ordinary moments.

“ Tush ! ” he exclaimed, with a half-laugh ; “ it is the breathing time of day with our plump cousin of Chester ; and, if the testy gentleman break custom, choler and fat may choke him. Let pass, my lords, and think we of these northern villains. What muster make we of true

men to beard them? What foes are certain? and what friends are hollow? Lord Marshal, thy heart is in the war-saddle? Milo de Miles! rough-tongued as thou art, do I not know thee trusty as forged steel? Reginald de Lacy," he added, as the dark Baron stood forward, with the air of one who was determined to be answered; "thy power lies northward; I look to hear that thou art foremost to cripple the rebel's strength. Look well to thy towers of Newark."

"I will, my Liege," replied the Baron, "and to my towers of *Mans*, moreover, if grace be given me. What answer makes *your* Grace, as touching *them*?"

"That they are thine, good Reginald, as heretofore," answered the King, "while thou canst yet so dream, and awake not."

"Dreamed, have I?" said De Lacy. "Your Grace is gamesome with me. Dreamed? How, if I answer in like mood, that I sleep fast, and will dream on till I have dreamed away this dream of life?"

"Put me not to make trial of thee," rejoined Rufus. "*Mans* is *my* city, and there an end. Who knows not that my royal Father won it with bow and spear?"

"Who knows not," replied the Baron, "that he released it to my sire by composition, when men and arms were lacking to make Duke William King of this realm of England?"

"Where be the vouchers?" said Rufus with a bitter smile; "shew me *them*, good Reginald; for we remember not these matters of chapmanship and brokerage."

"Deal not with me as with a babe, my Liege," said De Lacy. "Look," and he pointed to a cross, figured in red, upon his mantle, "I am bound to the Holy Land; and in the name of Him for whose tomb I am to do battle, and before these, his holy servants, I do demand a pledge from thee, Sir King, that Mans be left in peace while I am absent."

"In peace, I pledge ye," answered the Monarch; "God's peace and mine, when I have spread my banner upon its walls; but not his or theirs that shall lift finger to gainsay me. Go where ye list in this holy humour, Sir Baron; but first, if thou be vassal of mine, levy me fit strength, under fit leading, to fight these rebels at home; this, or pay scutage to the full; we give thee choice."

"My oath," persisted De Lacy, "was taken for the Holy War before I knew of this rebellion;

and, for my city of Mans, I hold it by hereditary right, as thou, Sir King, thy throne. If ye dispute my just succession, appeal we to King Philip, and I will plead my cause before the proper court."

"I will plead with ye," rejoined the King; "but my lawyers shall be right keen ones; lances and swords and arrows; be sure of that, great Baron."

"Then by the blessed cross which I have taken," exclaimed De Lacy, "I will mark that holy sign upon banner and shield, helm and mantle, surcoat and saddle, horse and tent; and so departing, as Christ's servant, leave my just cause to his holy keeping!"

"Do as ye list," repeated the Monarch, unmoved by a threat then considered so awful. "I seek not to make war upon Crusaders; but I will have the lands my Father had; aye, every hide and oxgang! Therefore, bestir thee, holy champion, and bar well thy gates, and look with good heed to thy bounding walls; for by God and our Lady, I will visit ye anon with a hundred thousand lances at my back!"

"And by God and our Lady!" iterated the provoked vassal, with like impious energy, and while his black brow grew yet blacker, "long

shall ye knock, and loud, ere one of a thousand gain entrance!—But I am answered, mighty King; and, under favour, will forthwith depart, to give mine household hint of preparation for such honour.

‘When bale is at highest
Boot is nighest——’ ”

and, with this doggrel proverb of consolation, he turned to quit the hall.

“Tarry,” cried Rufus. “Thou hast done me good service, Reginald de Lacy, and I would thank thee for it.”

“Now grace forbid your Grace should be so gracious!” said the Baron scornfully. “God keep me from the gratitude of Kings!”

“The devil will not have it so,” rejoined Rufus. “For, in the ears of all this presence, I thank thee *that thou hast made prisoner Constance de Mowbray*. Nay, wince not, pious Reginald! It was as *hostage*, doubtless, for her rebel father, and, by St. Luke’s face! better worth than a thousand others! But *thou*, Champion of holy men and sepulchres! art no meet keeper for a buxom damsel; give up, if ye be wise; have her within these walls with thy best speed; and look—” added the sarcastic

Monarch, suddenly lowering his deep harsh tones, "look that the casket be unbroken, and the gem safe. Dost thou understand me, *chaste* journeyer to Jerusalem?"

"I hear," replied the Baron. "But it boots not. Lay charge upon others, Sir King, and chief upon Stephen de Albemarle, who snatched the banquet from my lips, and is like, ere this, to have fed full upon't himself. By St. Anthony, I play not the hypocrite; I had worked my pleasure with the fair fool, and denied it not when done; but the good Earl, your cousin, took me at disadvantage, rent the spoil from the spoiler, and left me upon the forest-turf with the blood running from my breast like a conduit. Why! who sees not that I am haggard as a sick priest, and flesh-shrunken to the very ribs?"

And, in fact, the appearance of the speaker corroborated his assertion; form and face alike bearing token of recent pain and sickness.

"But, here," he continued, as the venerable Archbishop Anselm entered the hall, "here cometh one through whom, as I live and breathe, I will appeal to Rome touching my city of Mans—I, a soldier of the cross, against your grasping Grace that will not stir finger for

saint or sepulchre, although the great Devil himself were up and doing, listing rather to tarry here at home to pill and plunder the absent chivalry of Christendom."

"Blasphemous hypocrite!" said the King, "*thou* a soldier of the cross! that believest not either in Heaven or Hell! get hence, and levy force, thou'dst best. Once levied, if thou depart my realm ere we have fought De Mowbray, set not foot in it again, or I will hang thee, traitor! and so look to it."

"Hear him, holy Father!" said De Lacy, "hear the Christian King threaten Christ's champion with a dog's death, for doing the work of Mother Church in the far East!"

"Both thou and he," resumed the King, "shall first do *my* work in the West. Look thou, Archbishop of Canterbury, that thy levies of men and arms, in this rebellious day, be far other than those for our Welsh wars of late. Send me not again such fleshless scarecrows upon skeleton steeds; milk-livered caitiffs upon spavined jades; the very scum of Saxon filth and wretchedness in all thy manors; the very jest and hissing of our camp. By St. Luke's face, Prelate, I tell thee, if thou again dost me such scorn, I will send thee to joll horns with the

Bishop of Ostia, whom, without my leave, thou hast saucily made Pope in my dominions."

It is not our province here to do justice to the calm courage with which Anselm refused plainly to furnish a single man-at-arms for the approaching struggle. *Once* had he compromised the solemn dignity of his office; but not again would he do so to be Primate of the whole earth. The King should have his benediction and his prayers; but he would fight with no other weapon.

"As the Lord liveth," concluded the old man, "I will not again bid vassal of mine strike with the arm of flesh, till HE that is King of kings, with his own dread voice, and in his own dread time, bids me be zealous even to slaying!"

It was in vain that Rufus heaped invectives upon him for his doggedness, and swore that he "hated him yesterday—hated him to-day—and would hate him still worse to-morrow."—Anselm replied only by gently shaking his head, as he appealed to some of those present who had urged his acceptance of the Primacy, "Said I not that ye were joining, in the same plough, an untamed bull with an old and feeble sheep? Said I not, that the sheep would be dragged by her fierce yoke-mate through thorns, and brakes,

and briars, till she had lost wool, and milk, and lambs, and was useless?"

"Aye, by St. Luke's face, holy Sheep!" said the King, "and thou *shalt* be dragged, whither we list to plough! and if thy wool, and milk, and lambs, be typical of men, and arms, and treasures, we will have tythe of thee, of each and all,—be sure of that?"

"*Treasures* wouldst thou?" said Anselm, "in *this* temple" (pressing his bosom) "mammon and lucre are as accursed things—they have no worship. But shall I give of our holy patrimony to be the price of blood? Shall I pour it out upon him who grasps the revenues of vacant sees and abbeys, and had rather the bereaved flocks perished than bid fresh shepherds feed and nourish them?"

"Why, what is that to thee?" said Rufus. "Are not the abbeys mine? Do ye as ye list with *your* farms, and I will do as I list with *my* abbeys. By St. Luke's face! ye that be the Lord's servants shall do somewhat for the Lord's anointed! and with a liberal hand in this crying pinch. Ten thousand merks have I disbursed to my brother Robert, that *he*, too, like the pious Reginald de Lacy there, may do *your* work and fight *your* battles in Palestine—and shall

your holy shoulders alone be quit of the general burden?"

"Pardon, great King," said the Prelate; "but if thou hast given treasure to thy brother, hast thou not thy brother's Dukedom in gage? Is it not thine to bend or break? We, of the groaning clergy, can bear no added burden, unless we grind to the very earth the wretched farmers upon our lands."

"What!" exclaimed William, "have ye no caskets of silver and of gold, full of dead men's bones? ha?"

There was a general movement of uneasiness at this bold impiety, as well amongst laics as clergy; but none of the latter had courage or principle to back the Primate in his opposition.

"I go," said the latter, "to take counsel of our Holy Father in Rome. Brethren of the Church—fellow-labourers in this vineyard of tares, tell me if herein *your* hearts are as *my* heart; and if your words shall be as my words—pronounce unto me ere I go hence."

"Verily, Father Anselm," said one of the mitred Dignitaries appealed to, "herein we have taken counsel, and herein we cannot *soar up to thy sublimity*."

"Go *you*, then," said the Archbishop solemnly,

“ *to your Lord* ; but, as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord our God ! ”

He then took, from the hands of one who waited, a pilgrim's staff and scrip ; lifted up his eyes to Heaven ; bestowed a benediction upon the King, and departed.

The Council, soon after, broke up.

“ Shaven hypocrite ! ” said Rufus, when he and Flambard were alone, “ if he go hence, I will strip me his farms and manors bare as the fallow glebe. ”

“ Something must we do, my Liege, ” said the Justiciary, “ if it be nothing better than stripping abbey roofs of their lead ; and the fair aisles beneath of those foolish pixies and chalices, and jewelled crosses, and embroidered nothings that the peeled gluttons are so fain to doat on. Come ! take we thought, my Liege, which holy sheep must first to the shearing ! — ”

While these and like resolutions were passing in the royal privacy, other passions found vent in the several chambers of Hugh Lupus and Reginald de Lacy ; where the former poured out his whole boiling heart into the ear of Matilda ; and the latter, with a fierce eloquence, shook down the already tottering allegiance of De Tunbridge. Reginald had indeed no heavy task ;

provoked and disgusted as was now the haughty, vain, and selfish Sir Ilbert, with the King's threatened disposal of his promised bride, Matilda. We say, *promised*, Rufus having allowed him to retire from a previous audience, fully trusting that his splendid offers for the lady would ultimately be accepted.

"Walk by my counsel," said De Lacy, to whom, in the fury of disappointment, he had unbosomed himself, "walk by my counsel, and she is thine, aye, without payment of one zecchin to this red tyrant, that thinks to make every man's neck his footstool!—Sup with me, good Sir Ilbert, and I will shew thee a bridge of safety over this gulf of storms.—"

Once confident of his knightly prey, the Baron hurried to strike, while the iron glowed, in another quarter.

He sought the tower allotted to Hugh Lupus, and presented himself suddenly before Matilda,

—"Staring, full ghastly, like a 'murdered' man."

The Lady's first words implied such an impression.—

"De Lacy!" she exclaimed, "or a spirit!"

"Himself," he answered, "that poor half of him, at least, left by the Devil and the Leech."

"Hast thou done a murder, Reginald?" said Matilda.

"No—" he replied, "but murder hath well nigh been done upon me."

"Aye," she resumed, "stabbed with bright eyes."

"They dig deep then," answered the Baron; "to draw blood by the goblet-full. Look!" and, throwing wide his cloak, he displayed more fully the ravages of sickness upon his else stalwart frame.

"It was bright *steel*, Lady; and stricken home, too;—laugh if thou wilt, but I have been stabbed scanty less than heart-deep by a woman's hand."

"Mother of Heaven!" cried Matilda, "but not by Constance de Mowbray!—ha?"

"By Heaven's Mother and my own, *yes*! Even by her! that pale-faced trembler! timid and shrinking as ye deem her. I had snatched the prize, by a shallow trick, from the yet shallower things who jousted for her upon the forest-lea—"

"Jousted!" interrupted Matilda.

"Why, heard ye not of that? Jousted, I say. Let pass. The prize was mine. They chased me hotly, and in vain, until that accursed Stephen de Albemarle, riding as though a fiend

bore him, halloed a voice of rescue, scarce five lance-lengths behind. Another minute and I had rid my saddle of the Dame, and, while they that aided me fled onward with *her*, I promise ye *this* hand had taught Stephen de Albemarle to thrust his busy fingers again betwixt me and mine? But, with the first breath of his lip, by St. Mary! my delicate one struggled like a sleuth-hound in a leash! shriek nor cry did she utter, but reared and writhed in my clutch, until, by evil chance, her own closed upon my dagger-hilt, and then——”

“ She stabbed thee !” exclaimed Matilda, her eye flashing admiration, “ why ! *there* wrought the spirit of her race ! *there* woke the De Mowbray ! But on—what next ?”

“ Blood,” said De Lacy, “ blood—darkness—earth swimming, and sky reeling. I remember but the idle heaving up of my brand, as the hot Earl came thundering towards me ; then all was black trance and dizzy stupor. When the cloud broke, I saw cavern walls, and a man, a Saxon, ghastly with vigils, seated near me, playing the leech. Three accursed days and nights of tossings, writhings, and drug-drinking crawled over me like twenty ages ! and then my good saint took heart of ruth, and, as the godly

phrase it, I arose, and girded up my loins, and walked."

"As spirits walk," said Matilda, "to judge by thy white cheek. Why, thou art bloodless; and reft too, for ever, of the bright toy that tempted thee!"

"Not so, fair Damsel of the West," he replied. "Enough of blood yet boils at my heart, though it be driven awhile from cheek and brow; and *that*, ere long, Constance of the gory hand shall confess. Look! for a space she hath changed her keeper, but not *fate*, nor Reginald de Lacy. *Mine* she is, and mine she shall be. A Saxon wizard, my good leech and friend, hath looked heedfully to that. By *his* spells Constance de Mowbray vanished from the greedy eye of De Albemarle as quickly and as fairly as from mine! ha, ha, ha! I laugh to think that he is cozened! I laugh to know that she is nestled whither he cannot climb, were he a King to-night—whither I, and I alone, have the clue to follow."

"Get thee hence, then," said the Lady, "all blooming as thou art, and woo and win. But thou art cooled, De Lacy; sickness hath frozen love; or not thus hadst thou given the sweet bird time and chance to gather plume for flight."

"Oh, content ye," said the Baron, with a grisly chuckle, "content ye. She will tarry till I come. High and strong is the cage; and if *she* fly to De Albemarle, or De Albemarle climb to *her*, the curse of the lightly-cheated fool be upon me!"

"There are," said Matilda, "those who shall indeed curse thee if ever Stephen make Constance Queen of England. But now, Baron of Newark, what course holdest thou in this new and troubled world? Art thou for King William or King Stephen? ha?"

De Lacy smiled grimly as before, while he replied, pointing to the cross upon his shoulder, "Dost thou speak of carnal vanities to the bearer of this symbol?"

"Dost thou speak to a fool?" returned the Lady, and then added, suddenly drawing back as the voice of Hugh Lupus sounded without,

"Make answer to mine uncle, for hither methinks he comes, yet shaking with the fever-fit of his wrath. Farewell, De Lacy, and remember, *my* heart, and will, and voice are as my kinsman's; and thou and the Red Tyrant have broken bonds for ever. What? shall not Newark follow Mans if——"

She ceased as the Earl of Chester strode heavily across the chamber, and then, adding

only the single word "Remember!" disappeared.

Hitherto De Lacy and Hugh Lupus had been of bitterly opposed factions; but the council-scene of that day had changed their position; made them brethren in persecution, and given them one common bond of new and exasperated feeling. Messengers were instantly dispatched for De Tunbridge and De Aldery; and the haughty discontented four met at supper with the promptitude of deep personal and political hatred. We confine ourselves, however, to results; merely stating that they departed that very night, suddenly and secretly, from Winchester; each pledging himself that, after a sweeping levy of his powers, he would march northward, and join the banner of De Mowbray.

CHAPTER III.

“ Shift we the scene : The camp doth move.”

Marmion.

“ ———Meanwhile, as they talked, behold, and lo ! there came a dwarf from the city of Camelot.”———

Morte d'Arthur.

HITHERTO the unities of time and place have been almost classically unbroken in our drama. We must now take license with both ; and, bidding a long adieu to the White City, premise the lapse of some weeks between the close of our last chapter and the opening of this.

We change the scene, too, from the sylvan slopes and woody glades of Hampshire, to the savage wilds and iron-bound shores of Durham and Northumberland.

In these provinces the flame of rebellion had now every where broken out, and, from the banks of the Tees and Tyne to those of Tweed and Teviot, not a fortress, or strong-hold of note, remained to King William, except Ber-

nard Castle and Morpeth, which were stoutly defended by Guido Baliol and Roger de Merley, both powerful Barons, and violently opposed to "the haught Northumberland." We have already intimated that the towers of Monkchester (Newcastle) had been seized, immediately after De Waleric's murder, by a detachment of the Rebels. They were now strongly garrisoned for De Albemarle, who, in fact, throwing away the scabbard with his assumed minstrelship, had proclaimed himself King of England, and established his court within those very walls.

About nine miles to the eastward, his potent friend De Mowbray lifted the banner of "King Stephen," upon the castellated Priory of Tyne-mouth, and resided there with little less of state than the new Monarch himself; while the remote stations of Alnwick, Dunstanborough, and Bamborough, given to the safe-keeping of tried friends, with stout garrisons, appeared tolerably secure from any attempt King William could make against them. The whole *Northern* power of the insurgent Earls was, indeed, now afoot; and such of their numbers as were not drawn within castle walls, or quartered in neighbouring towns and villages, encamped along the banks of the rivers, ready at an instant's warn-

ing to coalesce and march upon a given point. In the mean time, their Southern allies, the Earl of Chester, De Tunbridge, and De Lacy, acting upon less organised plans, taken by surprise, and having levies to raise in, and conduct through, districts where the power and authority of William were yet recognised, had a more tedious and dilatory game to play. Assurances, however, reached De Mowbray that they were, at length, *en route*, and in such numbers as would enable the combined powers to fight even a pitched battle with Rufus.

On the other hand, that fiery Monarch, nothing doubting, and nothing fearing, threw himself with a fierce alacrity from his throne into the war saddle ; and, like the “blazing Hyperion” of Keats, threatened speedily to

“ ——— stretch a terrible right arm
Over the troubled confines of his realm.”

Flambard, with the power of Regent over the south, remained at Winchester. All the great vassals of the crown, obeying the summons to which their tenures subjected them, joined the royal standard in full force at Tamworth ; and, from thence, set out in two hosts to meet or surprise the Rebels. One of these divisions, under Rufus himself, with the Constable De

Miles, and the prime chivalry of the Royalists, marched direct upon York; that city, with its powerful castle, being the first of De Mowbray's strengths which lay in the route northward. The other forces, led by Montgomery, glanced to the westward, with a view, not only of assuring the Northern Welsh Marches, but of intercepting, if possible, the yet divided legions of Earl Lupus and De Tunbridge. The King succeeded with little delay, in *his* object, York being surrendered upon the second summons; but the speed and vigilance of the Marshal were eluded by the Earl of Chester and Sir Ilbert, who, effecting their junction, hurried northward to the main body, and at the moment of our narrative being resumed, were within little more than two days' march of the Tyne. Let us not forget to add, that the Damoiselle Matilda was in their company, nothing loth; and that not a *preux chevalier* of them all shewed greater enthusiasm in the cause, or more indifference to fatigue and danger.

So much for the high and mighty of our personages. But where was the gentle Raymond? where the lovely Constance? where the *unlovely* Dwarf? and where the jolly Knight of the Broken Lance, with his mad-cap Squire? As to

the three first, we venture to reply in the words of the Author of "Henry, Earl of Moreland:"

"AUTHOR. While all imaginable care is taking for the recovery of these poor people, we beg leave to return

"FRIEND. Ah, plague upon your '*return!*' here you have raised my curiosity to the highest, and distressed me in the extreme, as to these unhappy persons, and, in the instant, you fly off from the satisfaction expected. But I presume you are *upon honour*; you are intrusted with secrets, and

"AUTHOR. Sir, you never were more mistaken. I know nothing at all of these people's affairs, but as soon as they are able *they shall speak for themselves.*"

For the present, then, this is all that we undertake respecting Raymond and Constance; and as for the poor Dwarf, who *cannot* speak for himself, we will endeavour that in due time, others may speak for him.

The good knight, Alberic du Coci, however, we will immediately set before all eyes. The first mover in the great military game about to be played, he had hurried northward, at the King's beck, to recover by a *coup-de-main* the important fortress of Newcastle. He essayed this by

forced marches and very inefficient numbers; expecting, no doubt, according to his ordinary sanguine wont, to fall like a thunderbolt upon the surprised garrison. He was very greatly mistaken: the stout Tynedale and Stanhope men had not so been instructed in carnage and castle-guard; to say nothing of the presence of De Albemarle himself, who knew as well how to defend a Gundulf keep,* ninety feet high, as any man in France or Britain. Du Coci lost nearly a third of his power in an assault, and by a subsequent sally of the garrison; and, although reinforced in some measure by scattered royalists, at feud with De Mowbray, he was fain to change the siege into what could scarcely be called a blockade—but rather, a mere *mal-voisin* matter of annoyance and occasion-watching. Retiring some two or three miles eastward, the discomfited Knight took up a strong position upon the northern bank of the Tyne, near what is now called Carville House, the ancient Roman Segedunean; the first of the stations, if antiquarians say true, where, *per lineam valli*, the fourth cohort of the *Largi* was quartered. Here, with the river protecting one flank, and a

* So called from Gundulf, Bishop of Rochester, an eminent architect of the reigns of William I. and II.

tolerably deep ditch, and hastily constructed wall, fencing the other, he pitched his tents and huts for the present, and awaited, with stout heart, whatever fortune might have in store—the aid of friends or the attacks of enemies.

Here, therefore, we rejoin our old acquaintance, and resume.

It was night—dark, with vast clouds hurrying over the heavens, and, notwithstanding the season, chill, and bleak, and showery. A cutting blast, laden with the mist popularly known in that blessed climate by the term “sea-fret,” whistled keenly through the encampment, and found ingress by a thousand crannies and loopholes of the ill-constructed hovels. It blew thus keenly from that bitter quarter, whose very breezes, upon the coast we speak of, are the peculiar dread of all things breathing the breath of life, and recall to every shivering invalid the words of Job, “why should a man fill his belly with the *east-wind*?”—a text, by the way, proving the universality of the infliction, from the shores of the German Ocean to those of the Sea of Galilee, or whatever waters rolled nearest the land of Uz.

Alone in his miserable hut, the remnant of a tower of the olden days, when the world had one

mistress, sat the Knight of the Broken Lance. He wore his armour and his riding cloak; his hands alone were unmailed, and, with a chilly gesture, he spread them to a little fire casting a stinted cheerfulness in one angle, and the fuel of which *might*, for ought we know, be the infant produce of a "*Walls-end seam*." Upon a huge chest, at once the armoury, wardrobe, and treasury of the Knight, and the lid of which did further duty as a table, there appeared, on one side, and within instant grasp, his sword and mallet of arms;—on the other, a small flaggon, and a little bread, marvellously coarse and black. He had finished his lenten meal, and, after a few strides across the narrow den, stretched himself upon a horse-rug by the glimmering hearth—gazed with a sleepy eye upon the red phantasma of its embers, armed monsters, and grotesque nothings—listened with a dull ear to the warder's steps without; and, slowly dropping his head against the chest, fell into a light sleep—the light sleep of the soldier, willing and anxious to be wakeful. It was broken by a touch and a voice; and, starting up, he beheld Nicholas de L'Epée, who, with streaming brow and muddled vestments, propping his back against the wall, and seizing the bread with one hand

and the flaggon with the other, looked the express image of fatigue, and the very emblem of thirst and hunger. He set down the too quickly emptied vessel with a long-drawn sigh, partly for his own exhaustion, and partly for that of the grateful beverage ; dropped heavily upon the chest beside Sir Alberic, and exclaimed,

“ By my faith, Sir Knight, I am well nigh breathless and strengthless ; and ye lie there looking like King Arthur in the olden tale, when he laid him down by a fountain side, and there, as the minstrel saith, ‘ fell into great thoughts.’ ”

“ And thou,” replied his master, “ art like the ‘ questing beast ’ that he saw come to the fountain and drink, and the sound of whose guzzling, *as the minstrel saith*, ‘ was like unto the questing on of thirty couple of hounds.’ Tell me, O thou strange beast ! what hast thou been doing ? ”

“ Pounding the Tyne in a mortar, and catching the east-wind in a net,” said Nicholas ; “ or doing that which is as bootless, scouring these bleak wilds, far and near, with soaked boots and a dry gullet for my pains.”

“ Hast thou been east and west ? ” inquired

the Knight, "within eye-glance and ear-shot of both castles?"

"Of both, with a murrain to them!" replied De L'Epée. "Ye have pitched tent here with a notably discreet eye to *that* service. We lie, methinks, betwixt the Devil's horns and the jaws of the deep sea; midway, that is, betwixt black Tynemouth and grim Newcastle. But, thanks to the rushing stream on *one* hand, and the roaring ocean on the *other*, and, ever and anon, black clouds over both, I have had luck to pass and repass without scathe or espial."

"Why, God helps the brave man and the fool," said Du Coci; "what sawest thou, gentle Nicholas?"

"A drove of fat beeves," said Nicholas, "entering the North barbican of the New Castle; some eighteen or a score, it may be—think of *that*, Sir Alberic! a score, and fat ones! ah, pitiful Virgin! if mine eyes, at the beholding thereof, wept not tears as fast and as hot as ever a roasting chine its heavenly gravy drops, set me to yoke foxes and milk he-goats for a thousand years! Oh, that I had had but twenty of our lean-jawed villains yonder, whose ribs are like to rub holes in their gambesons ere long! we would have fought for the brave kine as never starved

dogs fought for a bone ! But, let pass, and take heart of grace, good Sir Alberic ; we shall either be speedily helped in this world, or out of it into a better ; for I heard the gateward of Newcastle swear lustily to one of the drivers, how that word had come suddenly to King Stephen of a great Host marching fast hither ; but whether King William to fight, or the Earl of Chester to friend, the Lord knew and not they—one or t’other, certes.”

“ Or both,” replied the Knight, “ as may well chance ; what more didst thou espy ? ”

“ The nakedness of the land, good master mine ; seeing no more of the swine’s flesh, and ale, and other purveyance yon Saxon villain promised ye, than I see of St. Anthony and his sow, in this sty of the empty trough, where we are all like to die for lack of vivers, if yonder Earl-King, indeed, come not out speedily with his full-fed merry-men, as strong as their own fat beeves, and charitably cut all the throats that have nothing left to go down them.”

“ A curse upon that treacherous villain of a Saxon ! ” cried the Knight, “ talk of gaining over *his* lying race ? why they will swear succour to ye to-night, and shoot a thousand shafts for De Albemarle to-morrow.”

"Aye," replied Nicholas, "they are all haggards of a like feather. But, it is said, the pork-fed rascals will shoot shaft and draw knife for whomsoever the great WOLFSIC-SE-BLACA biddeth them."

"The great Devil!" exclaimed the disappointed commander; "but *how* call ye your great sick wolf of a Saxon?"

"Wolfsic-se-Blaca," repeated Nicholas; "or, if ye be deaf of your Saxon ear, Wolfsic *the Pale*—pale he is, and great he is, after a fashion—a great rebel—a great knave—a great one-legged king of cripples, who keeps his court hard by here, in some odd hole of the wild sea-rocks. Men say that he can do whatsoever he lists with man, woman, and child of the fallen race; and hath tickled more Normans with sharp iron feathers than ever a bush-fighter of them all. Ever at morning he prays for a quick-spreading pestilence in all our members; and, at eve, that Heaven may send us perpetual dearth, with horrid memory of fat harvests. Marry, now, if ye would but swear to this Gog-Magog of the Saxons, that King William is minded to deal graciously with them, so that they be forward to do him good service in this day of need——"

"Why," interrupted his lord, "it is well said, and *thou* shalt be hostage with them for the tender mercies of the King. But what aileth thee on a sudden, Squire Fool? Seest thou already, with those staring apprehensive eyes, the Gog-Magog of the Saxons ready to scoop them out of their sockets, ha?"

"No," replied the son of Jodesac, looking strangely towards the ruined entrance, over which a fold of canvass was loosely drawn, and edging slowly towards the opposite corner, "if I were now to be afeard, it would be of a thing of far other inches—by Mary-mother, I——"

He stopped, passed his hand across his forehead, and, drawing himself wildly up, shut his eyes close, as one who strives to shake off a morbid or nervous phantasy. Sir Alberic, now also rising, saw that he was actually pale with emotion, and said, with a kindly earnestness—

"Why, gentle Nicholas, how fares it with thee?" then, drawing him on to the chest, "sit—sit, rest and be of cheer. What, man! this comes of thine over-zealous watchings and wanderings, thy daily toiling at ditch and rampart, and nightly vigils and espials—they have outworn thee. But, look, *mine* hath been the error, and I will amend it. Rest thee, good youth, and take food and wine, and——"

"For God's love," said Nicholas, "make me not too much ashamed of this puling green-girlishness ; but, as I live and breathe, it will not yet away from me that I have this night been elfin-chased from the sea-rocks hither, over the bents and the wild moor !"

"Elfin-chased ! thou marvellous gander !" cried Du Coci, "eat, drink, and sleep, I say ; and have done with this cackling silliness !"

"Nay—" rejoined the Squire, "but methought, even now, as this fool's qualm came over me, that the small, fearful visage glared upon me from the entrance curtain !—"

"Hold thy peace, good goose ! hold thy peace," said the Knight, laughing, "unless thou hast brain enough left to tell me what manner of eldritch wild-fowl, what strange spirit in the shape of a swine-keeper's ban-dog, or what frightfully-shaken bull-rush, hath given thy five wits such a buffet on the cracked side ?"

"Ye spake of *wine*—" said the Squire, stretching himself faintly and uneasily by the hearth ; and, after a heavy pull at the replenished flaggon, adding, "Dost thou remember, Sir Alberic, that monstrous mushroom, hight Elfin Puckfist, that waited heretofore upon De Almarle, in Hampshire-woods ? that grim babe

that the Devil necklaced with knot-grass* in the cradle? the same who, I have told ye, was left, plying leech-craft, when that infernal buffet from an unseen fist laid me helpless by the side of the now-vanished Raymond?"

"Grammercy, sensible one!" exclaimed the Knight, "chased by *that* beagle? why, thou shouldst have chased the chaser, remembering that the poor Dwarf vanished also upon that busy night, and, if De Albemarle speak sooth, hath never been seen since. There is hope that the poor imp hath broken cage, and, had he a tongue betwixt those hideous jaws of his, might tell into whose clutches our gallant Raymond hath fallen. Oh, thou shouldst tush!" he added, interrupting himself,—“the disease of folly is more catching than the drife. Let us to rest, with this dreary lullaby of whistling wind; and pray well that thy dreams be neither of dwarf nor devil.”

Both Knight and Squire then stretched themselves sociably under their riding cloaks, and the latter, greatly exhausted, was soon buried in profoundslumber. Again the night-wind sang dreamily in Dn Coci's ear; again the dying embers came

* Knot-grass was in that day supposed to prevent the growth of children or animals.

in tremulous and prolonged glimmerings upon his eye; and again the calm blessing of repose descended upon the rough pallet of the soldier.

But it was not destined for endurance.

Awakening once more with a start, it seemed to him as if a cold finger had been just then pressed upon his brow. He looked, and listened. All was silent, and there lay the heavily-sleeping Nicholas. But, upon turning round, a strange low form presented itself, standing midway between him and the entrance.

"Mary-mother!" he ejaculated, rubbing his eyes, and gazing steadfastly upon the apparition, "am I, too, a driveller or a dreamer? Why, what art thou?"

The object drew slowly nearer; and the Knight, throwing a few dried leaves and twigs upon the embers, saw, by the short-lived blaze, that his visitor was none other than Elfin Puck-fist. There, at least, stood all that remained of the poor Dwarf, upon whom, always sufficiently lean, famine seemed to have been doing a superogatory work of attenuation, until his appearance suggested that of a man's head, fixed, by artificial mechanism, upon the skeleton of a child.

“*Thou!*” said Du Coci, “whence? and wherefore?”

The creature raised a finger, as if to bespeak attention; and then, pointing to the entrance, motioned to beckon him forth.

“Thou art *dumb?*” said the Host.

The visiter threw his head backward, and then slowly declined it forward upon his breast; and immediately repeated the gesture of summons.

“Softly—I pray you. Where is thy lord, the sometime Minstrel? Nay, gentle Puckfist, thy head-shakes and hand-wavings serve not the present turn. Ye are a subtle nation, ye silent small men; and have that, in the place of bulk and wisdom, which oftentimes gives ye the forehand of better natures and statures both. What wouldst thou, I say, and whither?”

The Dwarf again shook his disproportioned head, and impatiently repeated the beckoning sign.

“Why,” said Du Coci, in the same low tones he had employed throughout, in order that the sleeping Nicholas might not awake to fresh terrors, “thou art the first starved wren that ever thought to play the decoy-duck with a belted

knight. Get hence, mandrake ! thou canst not lead Alberic du Coci into the traps or springes of De Albemarle."

At these words, the summoner struck vehemently upon his bosom, and raised his hands to heaven, with the air of one who makes a solemn adjuration. He then stretched his shrivelled forefinger rapidly to every point of the compass in succession, to the roof and to the floor ; shook his matted elf-locks, folded his lean arms, and looked sorrowfully down.

It was an enigma ; but one, however, which Du Coci thought he could solve ; understanding the Dwarf to swear by it that he knew nothing of his quondam lord ; not even whether dead or alive.

" Well," he resumed, " and Raymond of the Heart of Steel ? ha ? tell me of him ?"

Puckfist started at the name ; grasped the arm of his questioner ; nodded rapidly several times ; and pointed to the entrance as before.

Sir Alberic lighted a small lamp that stood near—and drawing his guest close, held it full in his wrinkled front, as if to read what truth or treachery the strange volume revealed. But the suspected one met the scrutiny with melancholy firmness ; and resumed the pantomimic lan-

guage of his infirmity. He pointed to the hand with which Du Coci still detained him; then to the edge of the Knight's dagger; and, lastly, to his own throat; indicating, by a transverse gesture upon it, the action of cutting that vital region across.

Relaxing his hold, Sir Alberic answered the Pigmy in his own way. He nodded with a grim significancy; drew out the poniard, and shook it alternately towards heaven, and in the face of his guest. Then replaced it, and taking up his sword and mallet, pointed, in his turn, to the ruined entrance.

It remained only to be understood whether De L'Epée, or, indeed, any human being, was to accompany them; but the Dwarf peremptorily intimated "No." Without disputing the point, Du Coci extinguished the lamp, drew his cloak around him, and followed his singular guide out of the encampment; leaving the weary Nicholas mercifully to his slumbers, and to his own puzzling conjectures upon awaking from them.

CHAPTER IV.

"Childe Roland to the dark tower came."

Ballad in King Lear.

It was a miserable night. The raw and biting east wind drifted full in their exposed fronts, now laden with the drizzling sea-fret, and now with heavier showers poured from the still ascending masses of black cloud that came rolling over the German Deep; and through which, at dreary intervals, the moon, a wan, dull crescent, shed a spectral and infrequent light.

The Dwarf led direct to the river's brink, and a boat (one of the few Sir Alberic had seized for the security of his position) bore them across the stream. They passed with little labour of rowing, for the tide was running strongly out, augmented by heavy rains through the previous days; and Puckfist, pilot upon the river, as guide upon the shore, suffered their little vessel to drift with it a considerable way to seaward. Their landing-place at length was Jarrow Point, so called from its vicinity to the conventual

house of Jarrow, the ancient Gwyrwy, then just rebuilt, after a destructive share in the avenging ravages of the first William.

Leaving the river at their back, and plunging for a mile through dismal swamps, our adventurers passed the dark and silent towers of the monastery and church, whose yet visible ruins the antiquarian traveller still associates with the venerable name of BEDE.

With desperate strides did our poor Mannikin essay to keep in advance of the stalwart Du Coci, as, glancing from the southern direction they had assumed, they, once more, and with better footing, trudged eastward towards the sea, the roar of which came every minute louder and louder upon the blast. At length their further course appeared stayed by the wild high beach cliffs, which, with little interruption, stretch for some miles southward from Tyne-mouth; and the vast and stormy expanse of the German ocean lay full before them.

Almost the whole of that bleak north-eastern coast, from the Tees to the Alne and Coquet, may be considered as "the abomination of desolation" to mariners; but nowhere is it more wild, and dangerously broken, than at the spot to which we have conducted Sir Alberic and the

reader. The shore is in the highest degree savage and terrible. Its rocks, shattered by a thousand storms, have parted, from age to age, with vast fragments that stand in every variety of grotesque form and combination; pillars, and tombs, and towers; ramparts, and huge bridges, and triumphal arches, through the black-green hollows of which the billows roar and dash as if exulting in the fresh paths they have worn and worked out for themselves in their playful fury. There is one enormous craggy mass, riven from the parent beach by that almost omnipotent ocean which it once seemed to defy, and now standing detached about a hundred yards, called (*præcipue et prae aliis*) Marston Rock. It is perforated as we have just described, and he who, during a stormy sunset, has sate within the mighty archway, and looked upon the foam-tipt billows, coursing faster, louder, and nearer to his craggy throne, while darker and darker clouds gathered over the heavens, and nothing of life was heard but the petrel's cry, and the sea-mew's shriek, and the clang of the cormorant's wing; nor seen, unless the flitting forms of these, and perhaps a solitary boat, half-hid in mist, while toiling to make the port ere night; he who has thus sat, has witnessed a sublime

spectacle, to which the gaze of life-long dwellers in plains and vallies can boast no parallel, and of which their imagination can realize no image.*

But, to resume our narrative,

Sir Alberic and his colossal friend, while the wind that roared along *the bents* flapped their wet garments heavily around them, lingered upon the dizzy heights only for the help and comfort of the next sickly moon-gleam; and then, by a most perilous zigzag, descended slowly to the chaos of the shattered beach. It swept around a little bay, guarded, and savagely adorned, by the fragments we have described; and terminated upon the north by the prime Limestone mass, Marston Rock; not then torn from the parent cliff, and with an opening no larger than would admit the upright body of a

* This scene of craggý magnificence lies about a mile or two from the port of Shields, and five or six from the rival harbour of Sunderland. Nature, in her beauty or her grandeur, is not generally worshipped with extreme bigotry by the trading in-dwellers of sea-ports; but *this* is one of the few and favoured shrines to which repair can easily be made by the more idle or imaginative of the busy and flourishing towns just named. "A holiday sailing-boat," says the lamented Surtees of Mainsforth, "has sometimes passed the yawning aperture of Marston with more happy success than the adventurous Cockneys of the Anti-jacobin.

"Shoot we the bridge!" the venturous boatmen cry;

"Shoot we the bridge!" the exulting fare reply."

man. Doubling this, for the tide was far out, they came upon another and a larger bay, with clearer, broader sands, sweeping round to the river-mouth, where a few paltry *sheals*, marked the site of what *was to be* the fifth Port in the first of maritime kingdoms. A heavy sea was breaking upon Tyne bar, and the surf running furiously over long black reefs that stretch beyond; threatening, and, too often, dealing destruction to the embayed mariner who hears the lee-breakers boil and thunder along their dreadful ridges.

Northward, dim looming through the night-shades, the vast monastery of Tynemouth appeared in lonely majesty; fragments of rock, blacker than the black ocean, heaped and scattered, like the *debris* of an earthquake, around the storm-rent base of the huge promontory upon which it stood; and along which its few but graceful ruins are *now*

“Bared to the set-winds sweep”

—Of the opposing horn of the bay, the modern Marston, the whole craggy line was broken by cavern-mouths, the grotesque inlets to those

“—worn and wild receptacles

Worked by the storms, yet worked as it were planned
In hollow halls with sparry roofs and cells;”

and through which, at high tide, the surges poured and broke with tremendous fury.

Into one of these, and one with the least inviting aspect, Elfin Puckfist guided the Knight of the Broken Lance. The aperture which readily admitted the Dwarf, required his companion to stoop low and heedfully ; and it was not till he had crawled upon hands and knees for a considerable way, now up, now down ; now right, now left ; and sometimes submitting even to a snake-like movement, prone on the sandy granite, that the dark windings expanded, and gave him freer access to the secret depths or heights he was to explore. Toiling upward by notches and projections that painfully did the office of stairs, they emerged at last into a cavern, dimly lighted by a rift, or fissure, on one side, that admitted a few broken beams of the moon. Elfin then pressed the hand of Du Coci admonishingly, and preserved, himself, that almost unbreathing stillness which implies the caution of a fearful listener. Suddenly his grasp relaxed ; a grating sound was heard ; a dim red light, as from a lamp or torch, spread along the cavern ; and the Knight perceived that a piece of the living rock, grooved and hinged with a strange skill, had yielded to the push of

the Dwarf's hand, showing the entrance to some wild retreat, thus jealously secured by "cunning workmen," from almost every chance of human discovery.

There was no sound or sight of life, and they entered; the Dwarf betraying (or affecting, for the Knight knew not which) as much surprise at their facility of entrance, as the latter at the strangeness of all around him.

The second cavern, for it was merely such, seemed, however, larger than the first, and hollowed with more of artifice into something resembling the abode of man. There were also some habitable tokens, however rude, disposed, or rather, scattered around. "What *seemed* a table, the *likeness* of an iron lamp had on," together with a knife, a trencher, and a drinking vessel. A few dim embers showed that a fire had been recently burning, and near it was a low pallet, sad substitute, perhaps, both for bed and chair. At the extremity of this drear apartment, the Dwarf pushed with his full strength, as before, and a similar inlet appeared, winding yet deeper into the rock. Again Puck-fist motioned caution and silence; and again Du Coci followed him, until the narrow passage ended in a sort of caverned hall, or chamber,

for it was impossible to judge which, so spacious did it appear by the dull lamp carried by the Dwarf, and which scarcely threw even a glimmer upon the opposing walls. They passed through without stopping to examine; but Du Coci's eye rested for an instant upon more than one ghastly object, and he knew not, in his bewilderment and awe, whether they were the spirits or the skeletons of the dead that stood in hideous niches above, or lay upon massy slabs below, and seemed to turn their fleshless heads after him as he passed.

Puckfist now set down the lamp, and they traversed in darkness another and a longer passage through this labyrinthine chain of caverns. The gloomy corridor wound on as if conducting to the "chambers of perpetual night;" but ended in a kind of gallery, which, like the upper cloisters of an abbey chancel, threaded the vast walls; and, by shapeless apertures, looked down, on every side, into a deep sad vault below. There, a voice murmured, and a light gleamed; but the sounds were not of life, nor the beams of comfort; and both seemed strangled by the misty depth and murkiness from whence they issued. Du Coci looked painfully through one of the jagged loop-holes that commanded the

strange scene, and he saw that it was one of extreme misery; extreme, for there were its worst elements; sorrow and penury, and sin, and age, and wretchedness, and approaching death.

The only inmates of that fearful chamber were two women; both worn by age, and—if ever human lineaments told truth—by fierce and long enduring passion. But one was at that instant dying, as her sharpened and livid features plainly told; and the other seemed watching gloomily by the death-bed which every other human being had deserted. Sometimes she pressed her skinny hand upon the bosom of the sufferer; sometimes listened to catch the suspended, or scarcely-drawn breath; and sometimes bent over her ghastly face to survey it by the dull beam of a lamp hung near the pallet head, and which, as the oil was nearly consumed, shed lustre

“ For a charnel-dungeon fitter.”

It was while the flame leapt up with one of its presaging flashes, and drew the glance of her who watched, that Sir Alberic marked how fearful was the expression of a countenance in which time and sorrow had subdued nothing

but gentleness and mercy ; in which every line spoke of ills sullenly endured, or wrongs savagely avenged. Twice she started from her low seat, and drawing aside the coarse black arras, which looked the very mockery of hangings, listened eagerly, as if for the approach of one who came not ; then returned to her charge, to watch the convulsions which, in delirious slumber, shot at intervals along the brow. More than once, when these were violent, she seemed to expect the parting struggle ; but the reluctant principle of life was yet stronger than she deemed it.

“ Loath—loath—loath !” she muttered ; “ the spirit is loath to part. Thou !” apostrophizing the lamp as it dimmed and flickered, “ *thou* wilt expire first, and evil things will gather around me, and tear the limbs of the dead ;—of the dead that hath died in darkness !—I must replenish thee.”

And as she busied herself with the cresset, that soon emitted a brighter and steadier flame, her dark mutterings went on,—

“ Aye ! blaze—blaze—a few drops of filthy oil, and thou art all life and youth again ; but,” turning to the death-couch, “ no oil for the lamp of life—no oil for the lamp of life ! What say the priests to that ? ha ?”

She then turned with stretched arms to the sufferer, whose stupor-fit seemed broken by a fiercer convulsion ; the corpse-like frame half-raised itself from the bed, and the glazed eyes lit up, as they opened, with a terrifying brilliance. It seemed as if they followed a Phantom through the thick gloom of the caverns ; and her voice, as she suddenly spoke, had the hollowness of a sepulchral echo,

“ O thou dread Form ! ” she exclaimed, “ thou that wert once so dear, and art so terrible ! why dost thou haunt me ? whither dost thou beckon ? ”

“ Thy soul is dark, sister,” said her companion ; “ it is dark and wandering ; and thine eyes look but upon the things of the loaded heart and the weary brain. What seest thou ? ”

“ Look ! ” said the patient, still gazing into the vacant gloom, and pointing with her skeleton hand, “ seest *thou* nothing ? ”

“ I see nothing,” replied the nurse, wiping the clammy brow of her charge, “ nothing but thee in thy sick anguish, and these dim caves, and the blackness of their everlasting shadows.”

“ I see a Spirit ! ” exclaimed the other, wildly, “ a Spirit beckoning with a cloudy hand ! It is my Sigeric ! my love ! my lord ! my warrior ! and my husband ! oh look, Wynfreda !

look! dim as the morning mist are his fixed eyes—calm as the frozen stream is his broad brow!”

“Hush thee, afflicted one!” said the Attendant; “hush, and be still. We are alone.”

“Alone with *him*!” raved the dying woman; “and he comes near! nearer! oh, sister of the dead! thou whom he loved in life, look! look how his pale lips smile!”

“A fiend abuses thee!” cried the other crone, straining her gaze in the direction pointed, and looking more than half-expectant of the vision she denied; “A fiend abuses thee, Adelaide. Were it my brother from his bloody grave, were it Sigeric with his festering wounds, *I* should behold him fairly as thou! he would not shun the eyes of his sole sister—of her to whom revenge for his slaughter were as a thousand years of joy and triumph. It is a demon, and not Sigeric! if it were *he*, no mist were in the eye, no calm upon the brow, no smile upon the lip! terror would be around him as a robe, and vengeance as a girdle of fire! his frown would be as the blackness of the storm, and his gaze as the red flashing of its bolts, when they rend the oak above, and shatter the rock beneath! his hand would grasp a broken and a

gory sword ; and, if he uttered forth a voice, 'twould be for Vengeance, Vengeance on his Norman butchers !”

“ ’Twas so till now — ever till now,” muttered the Sick ; “ so have I seen him when sleep came not at midnight, after long brooding o’er the past ; or when it fled at the voice of the rushing storm, and my awakening eyes beheld him pacing, dark and terrible, by my couch ! so have I seen him in my noon-tide path, when the shrill east blew fog and spray along the beach ; the helm upon his brow, the gory mail upon his limbs, the dripping and shivered steel in his fleshless grasp ! Thus, too, hath thy dark brother, Wolsic-se-Blaca, he, ‘ *the Avenger*,’ seen him by wood and wold, upon the midnight heath, and by the fall of torrents, in huts and caves, in halls and chambers, when other eyes were blinded, even as thine are now, and no ear but his drank in the cry for blood ! so have we seen him in these caves of vengeance, ere we have done the deeds that — oh, God ! ”

She ceased, and with a gesture of horror, and clasped arms, shrank as if her whole frame suffered collapse by a wrench of mortal agony ; then, sinking slow and shudderingly upon her pillow, and fixing a dreadful look upon Wynfreda, she added, distractedly,

"Speak comfort to me, O sister of Sigeric ! of him for whom we have done these slaughters—tell me that in the grave there is peace ! that there is no ear above for the cry of blood ! tell me that priests *lie*—that there is no Heaven or Hell—oh, tell me that there is no God ! no God ! no God !"

She, to whom this horrible adjuration was addressed, shrank not, nor shuddered ; but her eye dilated, and her brow grew white as she made answer,

"Question thy haunting spirit, if such be. Adjure him by all powers—by Christ and Woden—by Zerneck and by Mary-mother !"

"I see him not," said the wretched being, gazing languidly in her exhaustion ; "he is gone from my sick couch ; I see him not."

"Art thou awake ?" said the listener, somewhat harshly.

"Once more," replied Adaleve, "for I *have* slept, and my dreams were not as the dreams of other hours. I saw my Sigeric, as I have seen him oft ; even as thou hast painted him, in wrath and terror ! even as Se-Blaca sees him when the terrible hour is upon his soul, and when avenging deeds are to be done in the caverned dungeons beneath us !"

She paused a few moments, and then resumed,

"It was night, methought, upon a blasted heath, and the storm-rack swept across the stormy heavens. My Sigeric stood upon the waste, tossing his cloudy arms on high. Around him were the blood-stained altars of other days; and, dim above, but vast and terrible, the gods of the ancient faith, bending over the grey stones of their power. Then I saw shadowy things (*one* like to thee, Wynfreda; *one* like thy brother Se-Blaca,) dragging two victims, a maiden and a youth, up to the loftiest and the bloodiest shrine. I saw them bound and bared to the keen knife grasped in the red hand of Sigeric; but, as the sacrificial steel rose for the blow, away, away in whirlwind and in cloud rolled shrines and Gods, victims and shadows! Then there was silence, and I heard a voice (mighty as the mixed roar of the four winds!) cry 'Vengeance is mine; *I* will repay!' and when I looked again, how changed was my Sigeric! how changed from the armed Terror of other visions—the frowning and the terrible! I tell thee, sister, his brow was calm; mercy and gentleness were in his eye; the wounds of the fierce De Mowbray's lance streamed no more; the mail of the haughty warrior was gone, and in its stead were garments of shining

white. The sword, the spear, the axe, gleamed not in his wan hand ; but in its unblooded grasp a palm-branch waved. He spoke, and oh, how changed was his dread voice ! its thunder-tones of wrath were hushed as a spent storm ; solemn and sweet and sad were its new accents ; and, for the once fierce cry of ‘vengeance ! vengeance !’ I heard but the unwonted words—*‘Forgive, and spare !’*”

“Sick dreamer !” exclaimed the stern Wynfreda, rising impatiently, “it is the feebleness of thy parting spirit that palters with thee thus. The words of lying priests, long scoffed at and defied, come back upon thee in thy helplessness, as carrion things prey upon the hunter, when his scared steed flings him from the rock, and the strength of his limbs is gone. I will arouse thee, Adaleve ! tell me, daughter of Saxon Eadmer—of that brave Thane, whose castle the fierce Normans gave to sword and flame, sparing not maid or matron—old man or babe !—Tell me, wife of Northumbria’s Earl ; widow of the mighty Sigeric, whose blood the Norman Mowbray poured savagely upon the turf—whose towers of Bamborough are even now the murderer’s high place of pride and tyranny ; whose captive sons and kinsmen have perished in its

deep cells and dungeons ;—tell me, Sister of that wretched one who married with the Norman butcher, De Mandeville of Essex, and fell the victim of his murderous jealousy ;—tell me, I say, WHOM wouldst thou ‘*forgive and spare?*’—Know, thou degenerate trembler in Death’s grasp ! the victims *now* within our clutch, whom thou wouldst *spare* for a sick dream, will be the dearest offering to the shade of slaughtered Sigeric that ever yet hath fallen to our great vengeance ! until De Mowbray’s self die by Se Blaca’s hand ! ‘*Forgive and spare?*’ Hath my devoted brother for *this* baptized him in the blood of Normans with the dread name ‘A VENGER?’ hath he for *this* groaned out long years in Norman dungeons ? for *this* watched, toiled, and bled, and shot a thousand shafts when other hands were folded in slumber ? that, in the hour of almost final triumph, *Thou* shouldst ‘*forgive and spare?*’ No, by Thor and Seater ! *forgive* thou mayst, but *spare* thou shalt not ! I go to summon Wolfsic by the kindled beacon ; if his steps be not afar off, he shall speed hither while thou art yet in life, and plead with thee for the great work of vengeance which thou wouldst mar and botch in bed-rid impotence.”

“Tarry,” said the dying Matron, feebly,

"tarry, sister, a little space—lest my spirit depart, and there be none to close these wretched eyes. Oh, tarry but the coming of the Leech!"

"Even for his coming, I go," replied the stern one. "He is Priest as well as Leech, and will prate to thee after the fashion of his tribe, after the sick quailing of thine own bosom. He will preach to thee of mercy — and"—she paused, and listened, for a movement of Du Coci's struck his sword against the rock; then added, when the silence was again unbroken, "—No. They come not. They will not come. An hour had sufficed, and Edric hath trebled that. What cares the Norman Leech for the dying Saxon? Tynemouth, too, is Castle now, as well as Convent; and Edric is slain or captive; no word of leechcraft passed to the proud Abbot."

She put a cup of some dark liquid to the lips of Adaleve, and merely adding "Peace, and be still;" and placing several large keys, as if for concealment, in a nook of the rock, drew her mantle around her, and quitted the wretched chamber.

It flashed instantly upon Sir Alberic, that one of the intended victims alluded to in the conversation he had thus overheard, was, no doubt,

his poor friend Raymond ; and, drawing a long breath, he swore internally to bury himself alive in those caverns of horror, rather than fail to extricate him. There appeared no sign of living creature remaining, except the dying, and the Dwarf Puckfist ; the latter, probably discharging the office of gateward, or porter, during the absence of the veritable official, who, according to Wynfreda's last words, had been dispatched to the Abbey of Tynemouth, for one of the Fathers skilful in leechcraft. And it was thus that opportunity was afforded to our thoughtful Elfin (chance-guided by Nicholas) to conduct thither Du Coci.

No time was now to be lost in planning and conjecturing. The whole range of the caverned windings had, perhaps, to be explored before success ; and, unless Puckfist could act as guide, the task might prove both slow and perilous. The Knight descended in heedful silence ; lest a strange step or sound should startle the fluttering spirit of the sick at once from its tenement. He took the passage by which he entered, and pursued it as far as the inlet to that fearful hall, in which skeletons seemed to stand as statues, or to repose, like sepulchral effigies, upon their slabs. Sir Alberic was a brave man, but he

stood by that entrance reluctant to cross its threshold—

“Bewildered and o’erawed he stood ;”

and felt strangely relieved when he saw the Dwarf approaching, lamp in hand, from the other extremity.

No indecision marked the conduct of Puckfist. He hurried with noiseless foot into the dying chamber, drew forth the hidden keys, like one who well knew the secret of their hiding-place, and then, beckoning the Knight, led the way by another passage and a steep downward stair, until stopped by a low oaken-door, bound, cross-barred, and clenched with iron. He applied the fitting key—entered—and held up the light, and then Du Coci saw, dimly, in the furthest angle, a female form kneeling by a couch, and with both arms crossed upon her bosom.

“ I guess ’twas frightful there to see,
A Lady beautiful as she,
Beautiful exceedingly !”

It was Constance de Mowbray.

CHAPTER V.

“ Now closed is the gin,
And the prey within,
By the rood of Lannercost !”

Bridal of Triermaine.

A GLANCE at the intervening fortunes of Constance is necessary, to explain her transition to the caverned hold of Wolfsic-se-Blaca; the same dark and repulsive Being whom we have hitherto presented as the Invisible and the Avenger.

It will be remembered that De Lacy, in his account of the abduction of our heroine, exulted in the circumstance of De Albemarle's triumph and possession being as short-lived as his own. The good Earl, in fact, had scarcely ridden a furlong with his prize before a shaft from an unseen hand pierced his charger to the heart, and threw both riders violently to the earth. In an instant a crowd of outlaws was upon them. One party seized and bore off the lady, senseless with

her fall ; another manacled her prostrate champion ; and, before the latter could demand a reason or a name, the whole troop was spurring fast and hard to the coast, where a vessel, engaged by Se-Blaca, awaited their arrival, and that of the Avenger himself, after he had discharged another of his peculiar missions. The Earl of Albemarle, however, was indebted to his minstrel garb and incognito for a contempt which gave him speedy liberty. His captors plundered him of whatever appeared worth taking, arms, purse, and harp-wrest ; and abandoned him, thus stripped, upon a bleak moor, to seek first a meal, and then a kingdom. He joined the nearest body of his partisans, took shipping at Southampton, landed upon the coast of Norfolk, where lay the strength of some of his adherents, and marched directly, with his new levies, to join De Mowbray upon the Tyne.

Constance, meanwhile, upon recovering her startled senses, found herself "cabined—cribbed—confined" in a bark, hurrying northward as fast as wind and wave could carry it. Permitted to leave her loathsome "berth," she stood at last upon the deck, amidst a savage crew, who gazed upon her, from under their dark brows and matted locks, as Spenser's satyrs and wild wood

folks upon Una or Britomarte. One of the capturing party acted as skipper. He was a man "having authority," and repressed the curiosity of his staring fellows with sufficient sternness. Once she asked him, in the "lingua franca" of the period, to whom she was a captive; but he replied, unintelligibly, in downright Saxon, shook his head, and pointed angrily to the cabin. There, when night and necessity drove, the unhappy girl retired; unmolested, indeed, but with dark presages and misgivings; and it was observed, by whomsoever entered, that her right hand was constantly within the tunic folds drawn over her left bosom.

In a few days their vessel breasted the surges upon the lofty shores of Yorkshire and Durham, then known under the general name North-Humber-land. They passed the monastery and miserable fishing port of Weremouth; and Constance soon beheld, with brightening eye and beating heart, the castled priory of Tyne-mouth hanging over the surging deep; and in which, at that moment, her powerful father held rule and court. The appearance of some vessels off the river mouth alarmed her fellow voyagers. They stood out seaward until night, and then ran by the dim star-light for Marston;

anchored at high tide near the headland, and landed their charge in a small boat amongst the rocks. Even before gaining the beach, a mantle was drawn almost stifflingly over her head; and, upon touching terra-firma, an arm of iron sinews bore her up a steep ascent in the cliffs. At last, bolts grated and doors creaked; passages were explored and steps ascended; she heard the voices of aged women, and, for an instant, rejoiced to catch the sounds; forgetful, or ignorant, that, even amongst her own sex, there are those who, in designs of cruelty, yield little to the worst of men. Suddenly the bandage was withdrawn, and she beheld a chamber, or rather dungeon, cut in the rock, as we have described other parts of Se-Blaca's dismal fortress; and which, as the low door closed upon one departing, seemed abandoned to her sole occupation. It contained only a stone couch, more resembling a tomb; and had nothing further to relieve its naked hideousness except, upon the walls near the couch, a partial covering of coarse black arras, and, upon the floor, a few dried bents from the adjacent sea-banks.

There was, however, a burning lamp, and even a little fire, with a few billets to prolong its glimmering solace. By this, sleepless and

hopeless, with hands now clasped, now crossed upon her bosom, Constance sat, or paced, at dreary intervals, listening to the shrill winds above, and the hoarse tide beneath; and still, whenever a sound arose that seemed to vary from these, placing her hand, as we have already described, within the bosom-folds of her tunic.

At last the door re-opened, and a man of a morose aspect entered with a small loaf and a cup. He placed them upon the table, surveyed her from head to foot, by the lifted lamp, with a savage curiosity; and then, pointing to the viands, said, harshly,

“Eat, and drink, and be merry, fair Dame.”

She gazed upon him without answering; and after another brutal stare, he withdrew.

So passed the night.

Morning brought this ungentle keeper again, with another cup, and another morsel of coarse bread; but he found the first purveyance as he had left it, untouched.

“Dainty, methinks,” he muttered, “or moody. As ye list, pale face, as ye list,” and so he vanished.

The fire was not renewed; and the sleepless girl was fain to pace hurriedly to and fro, to keep her chilled blood from utterly freezing. The

lamp, too, had of course expired; but a little day-light, as well as air, found its way in by several chinks and crannies above; and there was one aperture sufficiently wide to afford a glimpse of sky. At last another visitor appeared.

It was the stern Wynfreda. Age had wrinkled, but not bowed her down. Misfortune had made her cruel, not sympathizing. She pointed sternly to the loaf and cup, and said, in cold harsh tones,

“Eat, minion! and drink; thoud’st best!”

She advanced until the light from the rift glanced upon her features, as if desirous that the prisoner might read in them the necessity of obedience; and Constance looked, and—obeyed. She obeyed; but, with the first attempted mouthful, sickness and shivering came over her; and, had she swallowed the bitter morsel, it had choked her instantly. A few drops of the liquid moistened her lips, and then she stood, once more, still, and ghastly, and without uttering one word, either of fear or hope, of question or remonstrance.

“Afeard of *poison*, belike?” said Wynfreda. “Thou art a fool. It were easier to deal with thee as thou art dealing with thyself—to *starve*

thee. But the Saxon will neither poison nor starve thee, great Norman dame! Eat and drink, lest, when the bridegroom comes, he find thee lank and ill-favoured, and will none of thee."

"Didst thou say *bridegroom*?" faltered Constance at last.

"Didst thou not hear?" answered the crone, with savage petulance.

"I hear," answered the poor girl, "and may God hear and help me."

"Canst help thyself, fair one, methinks!" said the other with a horrid laugh. "Thou canst *stab*, ha? but not *true* and *deep*—not to the *heart*. Thou hast but scratched, and angered; and he commends him to thee from his towers of Newark; and bids thee look for him (if it please Heaven, and the Leech) ere thou hast slept two nights alone."

"*Alive!*!" said Constance, with clasped hands, and in a tone so low with horror, that Wynfreda did not hear, and went on insultingly,

"O! thou shouldst have been a *Saxon*, trodden and spurned, and heart-wrung; braved and beggared by foreign churls; and *then* thou hadst stricken home! a thrust with thy very broidering needle had been worth a thousand lances for the deed. But, hark thee, cold trembler! if thou

wouldst shed blood to purpose, *eat* and be strong ! *drink* and curse ! and brood over thy wrongs, and fever thy chilled veins till their red current boils like a mountain stream ! He comes, pretty one ! the great De Lacy comes !—”

And, with this infliction of wretchedness, the she-wolf turned and departed ; locking her captive within, and leaving, although the captive saw it not, a spy upon her agonies. But the mind of Constance was made up. She sat down. Her cheek was quite bloodless. Her eye had a strange sparkle. She drew out, with her left hand, a little rosary, and kissed the suspended Cross,—with her right, the short keen dagger which had so constantly been in its grasp since her captivity. It was De Lacy’s—the same with which she had stabbed him.

“ *His* blood,” she said, with a dreadful calmness, “ is upon it. It shall not mingle with mine. Not even thus.”

And slowly and heedfully she applied herself to cleanse and polish it with her tunic-hem ; until the blade, as she held it up to the dim day-beam, glanced clear and stainless. All that escaped her during this process, was in fragments ; broken hints of a dark purpose.

“ Yes—instantly—instantly it must be. Sleep

is treacherous. Food may be drugged. Instantly—while I have yet strength—Raymond !—Oh God !—so young !—”

She started up—pressed her cold forehead with her colder hand—once more kissed the Crucifix, and at the same moment Elfin Puckfist sprang before her, and threw himself at her feet. At another time an apparition so strange and sudden had been worse than startling ; but her high-wrought mind was now beyond an ordinary emotion. The sight of the Dwarf, indeed, suggested the image of his Lord ; and a vague feeling of hope once more sent the poniard to its hiding-place. Eagerly she questioned him of De Albemarle, but he replied only by repeating the same form of gesticulation he had before employed to assure Du Coci of his perfect ignorance. When, however, she uttered the word “ Raymond,” Elfin sprang to his feet, caught the hem of her tunic, nodded repeatedly and earnestly, and pointed downwards ; signs which conveyed nothing to Constance, except, from his general manner, that the object of her inquiry still lived.

Suddenly he addressed himself, with all his pantomimic eloquence, to prevail upon her to take food. He performed the office of “ taster,”

and refused a single answering gesture to her most importunate query until she complied. Satisfied in that point, the Dwarf then busied himself with a scrutinising survey of her prison ; measuring its height with his keen eye ; crawling along the sides of the floor on hands and knees ; prying under the black arras, and thrusting his lank fingers into every rent and cranny of the rock. He seemed at last to find what he required ; a cavity, with a fissure running deep into the outward wall ; and which, with no better instrument than an old *quarel*, or cross-bow-bolt, he immediately began to enlarge ; *gouging*, and chiselling, and scooping out the limestone at a surprising rate ; and working, indeed, with the furious industry of one who has a heavy task before him, and little time to accomplish it in.

Constance rose from her spare meal to study the mystery of excavation under this strange master ; and, although it was far from obvious what purpose would be answered by drilling through the face of a perpendicular cliff, where the outlet would be at least thirty or forty feet above the level of high tide, yet, such is the thirst for freedom, when worse than death awaits the imprisoned, that the lady soon wrought at the task as hard and sedulously as her instructor.

About two hours wore away at this unwonted toil ; the labourers relieving each other at short intervals ; when, suddenly, a heavy stroke upon the door summoned the Dwarf. The arras was dropped over the cavity. Constance resumed her couch ; and as the door opened for Puckfist's departure, she caught another glimpse of the haggard face of her last janitor.

Every day, at the same hour, the Dwarf now made his appearance with the cup and loaf ; and was, as regularly, locked in by the stern and suspicious Wynfreda, who, sleepless in the due season of sleep, daily at that time slept in her cell, and took this mode of making assurance doubly sure with the yet distrusted Elfin. Every day, therefore, the work of excavation went busily on for the allotted two hours ; Puckfist labouring alone through that period, in order to leave Constance refreshed for solitary toil after his departure, and, at intervals, carrying off and levelling the sandy particles scooped out.

At length, another gaoler appeared. It was Wolfsic-se-Blaca himself ; and the hand of Constance once more hurried into her bosom ; for the voice of this dark Being was terrible, and his eye was cruel.

" Hail, noble Damselle !" he exclaimed in

grim irony: "Daughter of the great Earl de Mowbray; bride of the mighty Baron de Lacy! make me proud with thy thanks; for *this* is *my* Tynemouth—my Bamborough! and thou hast eaten of *my* loaf, and drank of *my* cup."

Constance, as we have shown, had wasted no words in parley with Wynfreda, whose fierce and malignant expression shut the door upon hope. But she now determined to try what could be done by appeal to the nobler spirit of man.

"I have, indeed, drank of thy cup," she replied, "and eaten of thy loaf—if thou art the Lord of this dreadful place. Yet it was but to prolong life until a human thing with a human heart might enter and look mercifully upon me. I adjure thee, by all that is most just, tell me why I am thus a captive! If for the lucre of *ransom*, thou knowest me, and knowest, therefore, who would pay thee even to thy heart's wildest wish."

"I understand," said Wolfsic. "But thou art deceived. Tell me; art thou the beloved of thy father? art thou as the apple of his eye?"

The heart of Constance filled, for no assurance was hers of being *so* beloved by De Mowbray.

"Wert thou a parent," she said, avoiding direct reply, "thine own bosom would answer

thee—thou wouldst know that untold treasures are given as dust of the earth for a child's ransom."

"Were all the dust of his broad Earldom gold of the purest, and poured out at my very foot for thy release," replied Se-Blaca, "I would not forego my grasp upon thee!"

"God of mercy!" exclaimed the captive, "wherefore?"

"Because," he resumed, "whilst thou art here; and while the lust of De Lacy burns; and while Stephen of Albemarle dreams of thee as his Queen; and while De Mowbray counts upon thee as a thing of price to be bought and sold, that his proud foot may trample upon many necks, I gain *that* by thee which is dearer to me than a thousand worlds of treasure!"

"Be not deceived," said Constance, hiding her terror, "What canst thou gain by cruelty which will bring thee neither power nor gold?"

"REVENGE!" answered the gaoler, "Revenge! which, to the heart that pants, and thirsts, and famishes for it, is power, and gold, and wine, and delicacies, and the whole earth, and the best part of that Heaven in which priests would shut it up from stricken fools and trampled cravens! To *my* heart, REVENGE is all this!"

"Blind, miserable, and malignant!" exclaimed the Lady, "*what* wouldst thou revenge? and upon *whom*?"

"Child—fool—and *Norman*! why should I prate of it to thee? but yet—not so," he added, with a fearful smile, "thou art no babe—thou hast written thyself worthy—*thou hast shed blood! NORMAN blood!* and hadst thou stricken deep enough, *that—that* alone had been as a ransom for thee within these walls. But he *lives*, feeble one! the hot De Lacy lives! and comes to banquet even now upon thy vaunted charms! Then—when that feast is devoured; and when the feaster in his turn is feasted upon; and when the would-be king, De Albemarle, hath flung himself into my pitfall; then, last and dearest, shall come the master-sacrifice, De Mowbray! to look upon the wide and vasty ruin, with pangs to which hell-tortures are as games of May! and, with his own accursed life, and that of his hot minion Raymond, to——"

"Vindictive devil! and not man!" interrupted the Lady, "Peace in the name of God! and get thee hence!—Fiends are ye all! Thou—De Lacy—the Hag that does ye service—Oh, holy Mother!" she added, fervently lifting her hands to heaven, "if I must needs be haunted with these furies, fill me with *thy*

strength to snatch the prey from the spoilers—to baffle and defy them !”

“ Pray long and loud,” said the Avenger, or never in these depths shall the Virgin hear thee ! So prayed, as I remember me, *another* lady-love of De Lacy’s—the fair-haired and the bright-eyed of other days—whose bones——”

He stopped abruptly, as if undetermined to finish a sentence of so much horror, then broke into a laugh scarcely less dreadful—

“ Ha ! ha ! ha ! tell me, gentle one, hast thou slept upon yonder flinty bed ?” (pointing to the couch) “ Nay—shrink not ! I go, and thy lover comes—he, the grim gallant of Newark—*fiend*, if ye list to call him so ; but not *fiend* or *hag* should ye call *her*, who hath purveyed ye *that* couch for your bridal need ! It is a blessed bed, if ye knew all ; less dainty, perchance, to tender limbs than the silky down of Norman chambers ; but, for a sound undreaming sleep—— ! Oh, I could show thee, were the hour fitting, *that* which would strengthen thee, with its hidden virtues, to make even the iron heart of De Lacy knock at his ribs ! Thou wouldst spare poniards, and seek but to stab his eyes. Such are the choice secrets of yonder couch. But, fare thee well, daughter of the doomed De Mowbray ! for

a space I trouble thee no more; and *be not curious*, Lady, until the hour of need; lest the hand that would throw fire upon another be itself scorched to the bone! Eat—drink—sleep—and *search not*.”

Thus saying, the Avenger turned and departed; but the spirit of his wild words remained, and lay heavily upon the bosom of the prisoner.

She looked for some minutes fixedly—almost fearfully, upon the tomb-like pallet which had served her for the broken slumbers of imprisonment; and sought, in vain, to guess even the nature of the occult horrors which Se-Blaca seemed to associate with it. Thick-coming fancies and suggestions, vague images of crime and terror—of darkness and of blood—chased each other in delirious whirl through her fevered and over-wrought imagination. But, though a thousand murders had been done upon its surface, what daggers could that cold stone, offer to stab the eyes of De Lacy? Had the stern Saxon, she thought at last, ingenious in his cruelty, vented these apparent ravings only to snatch from her the last solace of the miserable—sleep? To call up, by incantations of terror, the spectral things with which superstition can torture even innocence itself?

The faint day-beam, struggling through the reft, grew yet fainter, as she communed thus darkly with her excited heart and imagination. Soon all was night, and all was silence ; for not a wind breathed, nor a wave broke, audibly without. At last, whether from refined malice, or something like awakening pity, the door again opened, and the hand of Wolfsic placed a lighted lamp within her reach. She grasped it eagerly, as the bolts shot again into their staples, and obeyed at once the irresistible impulse of her curiosity.

Drawing the scanty coverings from the pallet, she found that the sides only were of stone, a lid of blackened oak resting upon their edges. Then, holding the light in one hand, with the other, eager and trembling, she lifted up the boards—looked for a single instant into the hollow beneath—uttered a faint scream—dropped the lamp, and fell senseless beside it upon the rocky floor !

CHAPTER VI.

“ ——— Now, at this hour,
Lie at my mercy all mine enemies.”

The Tempest.

ENOUGH of the solitary horrors of Constance. We pass the days of silent toil, shared for the usual brief interval by the Dwarf, still her diurnal cup-bearer. We pass the wretched nights worn through in broken slumbers as far from the couch of terror as possible; and resume where we broke off, at the entrance of Sir Alberic and Puckfist.

It was no moment for explanations, or the forms of greeting.

“Away, Lady!” cried the Knight, “misery and death are here!”

“O God!” exclaimed the startled captive, “a Norman voice! a Norman knight!”

“Fly!” he continued; “yet but a few lost moments and Destruction swoops upon us! thy hand!”

"Take it," she replied, "and may God pity me if I am again deceived."

"Amen," rejoined Sir Alberic, "and judge the deceiver. Now, away!"

They fled along the vaults as fast as Puckfist could lead without extinguishing the lamp; Du Coci, it must be remembered, knowing whom he protected, but Constance wholly ignorant of her protector.

Their way necessarily led through the chamber of Adaleve; and her expiring moans struck upon their very hearts as they entered.

"Hark! and behold," said Constance, "another victim!"

"Now, may God pardon her!" said Du Coci, recalling what he had overheard; "she hath help to make many victims; but her last sin is sinned. She dies, even as I speak."

"Yes," said Adaleve, vainly striving to raise her emaciated frame; while the pitying Constance bent over her to wipe her filmed eye and chafe her cold hand. "I die, Stranger! and there are no lips but thine to say, 'God pardon her!' The last of human things that loved or feared, obeyed or cherished, hath fled from me, and I depart like a cast-out dog. The Leech comes not; the Priest hears not; there is no

hand to bring a little water to my dying lip ; and my soul, heavy with many sins, goes hence without a prayer ! ”

“ Oh, do not say it ! ” exclaimed Constance, in great horror—and regardless of the Dwarf’s impatient signs for continued flight, “ do not say it. Pray, sufferer ! I will support thee, and bear up thine hands in mine.”

And she attempted to close and raise them for the great charitable purpose ; but the last remains of strength in the dying woman seemed tasked to prevent it. Remorse and despair had fastened strongly upon her.

“ I hear many voices,” she said, wildly, “ crying for mercy—the mercy we never granted ! I hear them in the deep cells below, and the dashing of the tide that strangles them, and their choked sobs and groans !——Oh, Wolfsic ! spare ! *my* revenge hath fed full ! Sigeric is weary of slaughter—vengeance is sick within me ! slay De Mowbray in fight, as he slew my Sigeric ; but spare the youth and maiden ! give not his fair child to lust and murder ! doom not the guiltless boy to the wild waves. It was his mother’s crime to wed De Mandeville, and with her blood she paid for it. Take him food, he is famishing, Wolfsic ! thy stern sister hath

broken his staff of bread. Oh, drag him not to those cells of death! it is the flow of tide—I hear it searching the craggy depths, and rising fast to his young lips—look! look! he tugs in vain at the strong bars! they are firm and tyrannous—the salt surf blinds and chokes him—he calls aloud upon his Lord—but De Mowbray hears not! upon *me*, his wretched kinswoman, but a fiend hath tied the hands that would save!—they were strong to destroy, but they are powerless to show mercy! oh, child of my lost sister! Raymond! Raymond! say not that I have murdered thee!”

Instantly as the name thrilled upon her ear, Constance sprang from the dying wretch that uttered it: she spoke no word. The power of utterance was gone. She snatched the keys from the Dwarf as he shook them impatiently at her side, grasped the arm of Du Coci, and fixed upon him a look which never woman half so lovely as Constance fixed in vain upon a brave and generous man.

“Now, by St. Mary,” exclaimed the Knight, “it is even so! Raymond also is in these accursed dens. He perishes—he dies—starved or drowned—while we prate here. Away, Lady!

and, for thy life, Dwarf, leave not unsearched even a nook that would nestle a sea-gull !”

They quitted the chamber of death, and followed Elfin upon a new quest.

How pure and holy is the strength of Woman’s devoted heart ! that night, as Constance hurried through the black and jagged caverns, she would have wrestled with a demon, had such arisen to hold her from the dungeon that held Raymond !

The way now led by the Dwarf had a ten-fold murkiness and horror. Rifts and chasms, blacker almost than blackest night, stretched away on every hand ; and, at times, they had apertures to thread resembling the rocky “ needle’s eyes ” of the East, through which only one person could pass at once, and that not easily. At last, in dragging through one of these, the lamp was extinguished by a strong draught of air, rushing as from a door or window suddenly opened.

“ Accursed chance ! ” said the Knight, “ who can grope his way in darkness through such a maze of fox-earths and mole-tracks ? hie thee back, thou luckless imp, and re-light the lamp ; and be heedful of thy neck, in Heaven’s name, or ours too will be broken ere we escape.”

There was, indeed, no other way ; and the poor Dwarf commenced his perilous retreat ; leaving Sir Alberic and Constance caged in grim niches, from which they did not dare to move, lest a false step might fling them into some craggy limbo beneath.

“Pray God he return in safety, and with speed !” said Du Coci, “or the hour of vantage will be lost ; and those may chance to arrive that will not leave open postern and free passage to go forth as we came in. The Gateward will arrive with the Leech ; or perchance this Saxon Devil of Revenge, Wolfsic-se-Blaca himself.”

“Five days,” said Constance, “if I have read aright the mute tokens of the Dwarf, he hath been hence with his fierce band.”

“Aye, Lady ; but his promised hour of return is past, and yonder she-fiend, his sister, hath posted forth to hurry him back with signal-beacons.”

“Should it be so—” rejoined Constance, “and God hath not willed that Raymond shall have help at thy hand, lose not any chance of thine own escape, brave Knight, to strive fruitlessly for mine. No ! I beseech ye. I have that within my bosom—” she said, (perhaps unconscious of the equivocation,) “which shall fence me yet from

the worst. Alone, thou hast many chances ; thy sword will cut thee a passage ; and thy foot may spring and clamber where mine could never follow. But, once in freedom, *this* do I conjure thee, fly, with thy best speed, to Tynemouth, and bid De Mowbray, if ever the name of Constance——”

“Hear me, Lady,” interrupted the Knight, “I have set my life upon this stake ; and that which hath been oft risked for the poor chance of a poor prisoner’s ransom—nay, for a freak—an idle vaunt shall not *now* be grudged, when my whole heart burns in the cause that asks it. If Puckfist return, and can indeed guide us to the prison of Raymond, we will have him forth, though we dig for it with our very nails ! If not, and I can fight a way for *thee* alone, out of this den of murder, by Him who helps the helpless ! my heart is firm and true, and my blade is keen and strong !—If *this* too be denied, and the Saxon villains hurl me over their rocks, as shepherd boys drown curs, then will it rest with these tough limbs and lungs, whether they have joints enow left unbroken, to drag me to Tyne-mouth, and breath to cry within its walls “Constance and Raymond to the rescue !”

“Now may God and De Mowbray, both,”

said Constance, "bless thee, generoust ranger, for those words!"

"Ah! gentle Lady—" returned the Knight, "God may, and will, if it please him—but for thy Father —— hark! heard ye nothing? listen—"

They listened both—anxiously, breathlessly, and, with the renewed rushing of fresh air, there came a sound of steps and voices, and then a loud clang; as from the violent jarring-to of a heavy iron door, which sent a hundred echoes bounding and rebounding through the caverns. Du Coci loosened his sword in his scabbard, and merely whispered, "Be firm—be silent."

The sounds of approach grew louder and clearer, and at last, a faint gleam of light shot along the ragged ceiling. It grew brighter, and the quick eye of Sir Alberic saw that their position was not unfavourable, unless the approaching parties had to ascend the very cavity where they were now niched in, and where, secure themselves from observation, they could yet glance down upon whatever passed in the vault-like space beneath.

Into that space, two figures emerged from the ribbed entrance. One, bearing a torch was

Se-Blaca; his companion, to the great surprise of the fugitives, Stephen de Albemarle.

“Tarry here;” said Wolfsic, fixing his torch in a cranny of the rock; “yonder monk must to his penitent; and I myself must listen to the words of the dying. Misery hath been long here, and now death. Sit, I pray you, and, for a little space, pardon the damp—the chill, and yonder sorry cresset. *My* castle, mighty Norman, is not as Monkchester or Bamborough; but he that is alone is, at least, *King of himself*.”

“Aye,” replied his guest, “the only King who hath not a fool’s trust in whom he governs; the only King well loved by whom he governs. But let thine absence be brief, good Saxon, for *to be alone* is self-sovereignty to him only who *chooses* it—as to the hermit in his cell, or the minstrel in the greenwood—not to the sick stretched upon a pallet, nor to the monk pining in a cloister.”

“No,” said the Avenger, turning and pausing for a moment at the entrance, “nor to the captive moping in his cage—*nor to the fool gulled into a snare*.”

He disappeared with the last word, and then the crashing sound, as before, of a heavily-closing gate or portcullis, seemed to make ominous comment upon the evil text.

The Earl liked it not; and Constance, in whose ears the threats of Se-Blaca were yet ringing, coupling with them all that she now heard and saw, doubted not that De Albemarle's share in those revengeful references was about to be realised.

"He is doomed!" she whispered to Du Coci, "these vaults are the graves of every Norman who enters them—he will perish with us—with Raymond!"

"I like it not," said De Albemarle, soliloquising aloud, and scanning his bleak lodging with uneasy looks; "*Fool*, said ye, Gaffer Grim? by Heavenly Mary, it goes nigh to look so! I am here in thy black caverns much like a woodcock in a springe."

"A lion in a pit-fall," said Du Coci aloud, "were the more *kingly* similitude, methinks."

"Who speaks, in the fiend's name!" cried the startled Earl.

"A poor Bachelor, God wot," returned Sir Alberic, "who lifts a Knight's pennon for King William in these evil wars."

"Then, God wot," returned De Albemarle, "I swear to thee, good Knight Bachelor, that *thy* wars are over and done. Thou art my prisoner. Yield thee, rescue or no rescue! for this is the castle of my stout and faithful Saxon,

Wolfsic-se-Blaca, and I, Stephen of England, am here in force."

"*Per-force*, thou *wouldst* say, gentle Earl," retorted the Knight; "for how think ye of your stout and faithful Saxon, when I, Alberic du Coci, am here in ambush in the very heart of his Thaneship's castle?"

"Palter not with me, for thy life!" said Stephen, "if thou art Alberic du Coci, in very deed——"

"In very deed," said the other, "thou hast paltered with thine own life, De Albemarle. Look! in these dens, from whence, as I well believe, never Norman went out alive, there is but one fate for thee and me, if yonder devil, Wolfsic, deal with us after his malignant wont! But, enough, I am thy prisoner, thou sayst—make it appear. Lay hand upon as thou canst; yet, first," he added, assisting Constance to descend, "behold my rescue or my ransom!"

The astonishment of the Earl was so great that he hardly forbore to drop both sword and torch.

"Constance!" he exclaimed, "Constance de Mowbray! my own—my peerless Constance!"

The words were joyful—but not to the object of their panegyric; they were full of passion—but how unwelcome to the ear they sought to

flatter ! Her present feelings, indeed, towards De Albemarle, since his brave attempt to rescue her from De Lacy, were those of kindness itself compared with former impressions ; but the words “ my own ! ” were a dreadful greeting, and, even at such a moment, she could not bear to pass them unchallenged.

“ De Albemarle,” she said, extending to him her cold hand, “ thou art young, brave, generous, noble ; the aspirant for a kingdom. Thou hast the form and favour which might command thee choice of hand and heart from amidst the daughters of princes—but thou hast no portion in *this* bosom—I cannot love thee, noble Earl. I *have* loved, and I love yet, but *one*, and he is perishing in these abysses of cruelty ! perishing with famine, or in caves searched by the strangling billows !—yet it boots not to grieve or to exclaim—if God send not a very angel to the rescue, *one* fate will speedily crush us all. Yet but a few short hours and the vengeance of the cruel Saxon is complete. Constance de Mowbray will be the bride of Death ; and the love of Raymond, and the rivalry of De Albemarle, and the generous friendship of Du Coci, shall be alike cold and silent for ever.”

The proud heart of the rejected Earl swelled

at the preference thus broadly avowed for another ; and even the closing denunciation scarcely manned him to endure as his struggling pride demanded. He still retained the hand which she made no effort to withdraw, and his own grew almost as cold and feeble. Striving hard, however, to disguise the emotion which shook him, he turned to Du Coci, and said, with haughty sternness,

“Minion of the Red Tyrant ! what makes *thee* here ?”

“That,” replied the Knight, “which were little in *his* behoof, even had it succeeded—to rescue from these pits a minion of *thy* minion, De Mowbray ; one whom, banded even with rebels as he is, I have no choice but to love ;—Raymond of the Heart of Steel.”

“Who saith that he is prisoned here ?” inquired De Albemarle.

“Thy Dwarf, Elfin Puckfist ; other messenger was there none, to play *friar’s lantern** with me into this quagmire of ruin. It was *he*, Sir Earl, that ‘mopped and mowed’ me hither,

* Will o’ the wisp.

“She was pinched and pulled, she said,
And he by *Friar’s Lantern l’ed.*”

L’Allegro.

whether in truth or treachery I know not. But, true or treacherous, he hath been lightened ere this of his load of keys; and now, therefore," he added, taking the torch, "it must be *my* turn to play the guide. We must back by the path we came."

But ere they could make one step upon the proposed route, Wolfsic the Saxon, once more presented himself.

It was a strange scene, the prison (if such it was) and its contrasted inmates. The yellow rocks and the red torch-light. Se-Blaca (with his recovered keys) startled, doubtless, by the apparition of Constance and Du Coci. The Lady, pale as a spirit, but standing erect, calm, unshrinking, between the stately forms of her armed protectors; and these with each a stalwart right hand resting upon a heavy sword.

Their keen gaze might have disconcerted a feebler man; but Se-Blaca encountered it without one token of surprise or confusion. He was the first to speak;

"What means this?"

"It means," replied De Albemarle, "that thy castle is ill-watched and warded, when whoso listeth may enter and rescue from its prison-chambers the captives of thy bow and

spear. Behold ! thou hast lost a ransom ! and know, too, that forthwith thou must content thee to lose another, or, by my patron saint, *that*, in lieu of it, which thou canst worse spare."

"Name it," said the Saxon, doggedly, "I would fain choose, if choice may be."

"Thy life, caitiff!" cried the Earl, in a voice of thunder; and, striding before the door, he prevented all escape by *that* outlet, while Du Coci kept a like guard upon the other.

"Hast fallen into thine own pit, brave hunter!" continued Stephen, "the choice woodsman is overshot in his own bow. Now, shew me straight into what cleft of these accursed rocks thou hast thrust the boy Raymond. Dost hear, gaoler?—Raymond of the Heart of Steel? Nay, dally not! betake thee to thy keys, and be speedy to let him forth, or, by my eternal soul, I will send thee to ply bolt and bar in the fiery dungeons of Satan! Look to it, I say, and set on!"

Not an instant did the aroused Normans suffer the Avenger to hesitate. He was compelled to start upon his ungracious errand, followed and guarded at once by those whom he conducted; and with a threat, deeply sworn, of being slain without mercy if he made signal for help, by

sound or sign, or failed at last to produce the captive "in life and limb."

Away, therefore, through vault and gallery, as before, went the redeeming party; Constance following, with one hand firmly grasped in that of De Albemarle.

At length, a steeper descent, a fresher current of air, the dash and murmur of waves, and a strong scent of sea-weed, all bespoke their proximity to the rising waters of ocean. Another of the low, strong, iron-bound doors which secured several of the upper passes, now also presented itself near the end of this lower subterranean range. Se-Blaca unlocked, and dragged it open, and stood upon the threshold, holding his torch as far within as his stretched arm would allow, but the wind occasionally rushed with such violence as nearly extinguished the flame, and he withdrew it.

De Albemarle bent forward, and heard the louder rushing of waves; but could perceive only that they swept through the black arches below, as if a heavy and disturbed sea poured them rapidly in.

"Are *these* thy dungeons, Saxon?"

"Aye, at the ebb of tide;" was the dark answer.

"The ebb?" exclaimed Du Coci, "and where at the full flow?"

Se-Blaca made no reply, and the heart of Constance died within her as she heard the waters roll and eddy beneath, and remembered the dreadful ravings of Adaleve.

"Best make sure of *one* torch at least," said Du Coci, thrusting that which he carried into a fissure, at sufficient distance from the draught of the door.

"Right," said Se-Blaca, "lest that which we must needs endeavour to carry be extinguished."

He then advanced one foot upon a plank, resting on the threshold ledge, and which seemed purposed to bridge over the gaping chasm beneath. But, whether from accident or design, it instantly gave way and plunged heavily down.

He turned, with a strange smile, to De Almarle, "Bridges have evil luck methinks, when *thou* wouldst pass them."

"When *thou* art bridge-ward;" returned the Earl, "but it recks not, mighty Thane! the evil chance must be amended. Thou knowest, I warrant thee, a trick to pass this gulph, bridged or unbridged; and if other path there be none to the youth's cell—why, so; enter and betake thee to it as thou best canst, with foot

and hand ; and let us behold in what wise to follow."

" And the fair Damselle ?" said Wolfsic.

De Albemarle took the torch, and again looked fixedly into the gloom beyond,

" Pondering the voyage, for no narrow frith
They had to cross."

The caverned abyss sank sheer down from where he stood, but the side-wall upon the left rose close by the entrance, and it seemed possible, perhaps barely possible, to a strong and fearless man, by the aid of both hands, as well as feet, to find a precarious footing in crevices, and upon projecting points, along its almost precipitous front. But the first attempt, to men loaded with arms and armour, and at the mercy of a trustless guide, was a matter of extreme doubt and peril.

" From hence to where the boy lies shivering," said the Earl, " how far I pray you ?"

" Ten strides," answered Se-Blaca, " were there but ground to stride on."

" What bolts and locks betwixt ?"

" None."

" Why, then, belike *he* may as deftly crawl or climb to *us* as *we* to *him* ? What lets but that he hear and answer if we call ?"

"Nought but these roarers," said Wolsic, pointing downwards, "But try—call long and loud."

And long and loud, with their united voices, did they call—and call—and call again—and listened, after every cry, with the quickened ear of those who listen for life itself,—but no answer reached them, except the hundred echoes of the caves, and the hoarse voice of the rapidly ascending waters.

"The tide," said Constance, "is fast gaining. Give *me* the torch, and wait or follow as ye list!"

"Peace, maiden!" said the Earl, sternly, if not harshly; and drawing her back, he motioned to Se-Blaca to enter the gloomy portal.

The Saxon obeyed, with a readiness which perhaps boded little good; directing them to observe where and how he placed both feet and hands; while Constance, who saw, at a glance, the impossibility of her accompanying them, stood upon the brink, holding Se-Blaca's torch as far within as she could stretch her arm for the purpose.

Du Coci first followed, and then the Earl; clinging like sea-fowl to the rock, although nearly dizzy by the rush of the black waves beneath. In a few minutes, Se-Blaca crawled

round a perilous angle, and the Knight, with great difficulty, succeeded in following him ; but all beyond was dark with impenetrable shadow.

“ Pass the torch,” said their guide. And, with difficulty, it *was* passed ; from the Lady to De Albemarle—from the Earl to the Knight. Se-Blaca then gained another “ coign of vantage,” where his footing seemed firm and free ; but Sir Alberic, whose knees and wrists ached and trembled with the unwonted toil, could not move one step from his narrow ledge without the use of both hands, dug into the chinks and fissures. He was therefore obliged to pass the torch into the outstretched hands of the Saxon.

No sooner did the latter receive it, than, with a cry of exultation, he dashed it down into the rushing waters !

“ Saxon villain !” cried De Albemarle, “ what hast thou done ?”

“ Norman dogs !” shouted the Avenger, “ Drown ! perish ! rot !”

And then, almost in an instant, an iron grating fell with a heavy clang.

“ Oh God !” exclaimed the terrified Constance, “ who hath fallen ?”

“ Light, Lady ! light !” vociferated both the

victims in a breath, " the torch ! the torch ! for thy life ! for thy life !"

She darted along the passage to seize it ; but, like a demon upon the wing, the re-appearing Se-Blaca sprang from the gloom beyond, rushed against the dungeon door, closed it in thunder ; and then, seizing the paralysed girl in his iron grasp, hurried her, more dead than alive, back to the redoubled horrors of her horrible captivity !

CHAPTER VII.

“ Alone with *thee* !”

De Montford, a Tragedy.

For a little while we follow Constance. She regained her consciousness, and that terrible composure which had lately hung about her as a thunder-cloud hangs sullenly in heaven before the flash rends it. She regained them almost before Se-Blaca had hurried half-way back to the upper and habitable part of his dreadful mansion. She had even the self-possession to remember the poniard in her bosom ; and, had not Wolfsic's grasp been around her arms, would have exerted once more “ the tender fierceness of the dove,” and, in a cause so dear and sacred, shed blood again, with still less of feminine compunction.

But the Avenger was not so to be baffled ; and she was hurried to her former prison. A ten-fold horror filled it as the accustomed lamp once more shed its sickly gleams, and the huge key

grated in the wards, and told her that all was over. Springing from where her tyrant had *flung* rather than *laid* her down, (that dreadful pallet!) she knelt at the extremity of the chamber, and prayed aloud in her anguish and desolation. Upon a sudden a sound startled her—she looked up and around—*did* the cover of the hollow pallet *indeed* move? or was it but a feverish fancy? She gazed and listened until eye and ear seemed alike dead to their functions; till the first saw all things swim and reel distortedly; and the last felt as if a benumbing opiate had been poured into it.

But soon, a sharper wrench of agony—a higher strain of terror, gave renewed and treble acuteness to both senses. A figure, habited as a monk—the same spoken of by Se-Blaca, entered and made fast the door within. He was tall and stately, and strode inward more like a mailed warrior than a recluse; and it *might* be this, and not the mere instinct of woman's horror and hatred, which told Constance, even before the lifted cowl displayed his features, that it was Reginald de Lacy. She uttered no word or cry as he approached; but sprang like a wounded fawn behind the couch, which, as it stretched nearly the full breadth of the chamber, formed

something like a barrier between them. She then stood erect, in ghastly relief against the black arras; and, silent, bloodless, motionless, gazing fixedly upon him, looked like the spectre of one murdered, standing beside the tomb from which it had just arisen. For some moments, her pallid beauty and marble stillness were terrible; and De Lacy felt sufficiently overawed to pause and contemplate them, without speaking. At last, as he dropped his monastic gown, she broke silence herself; but it was in terms that sounded like insanity.

“Aye! drop it. I know thee; thou art the human devil, De Lacy. Fiend! avoid thee! what have I to do with *thee*?”

“Much,” he replied, “whether I be devil or man. But I am no spirit, Lady; this flesh is yet sentient—this blood still flows—my heart still beats—and I am *faithful!* faithful as the miser to his gold, the glutton to his feast!—scorns—hatreds—wrongs—*stabbings*—all these shake not the fixed faith of Reginald de Lacy. Behold me!”

The eye of Constance wandered, as if vainly looking round for something like defence or rescue. A shudder crept over her whole frame, as she muttered in low tones,

“ Alone with THEE ! ”

“ Aye, Lady ! where there are none to hear—to pry—to prate—to meddle. Where screams that would pierce a castle-wall die like sick whispers in ears of granite. Where he that is Lord, hates the very name of De Mowbray worse than a goblet of toad’s juice ; where the power of the Red Tyrant is a jest, and that of the smooth King Stephen, a hissing and a scorn ; where the boy Raymond can do no tricks of chivalry in thy behoof ; where I, Reginald de Lacy, am all in all ! and thou, Constance de Mowbray, art mine, body and soul ! ‘ Yield thee ! give me a bridegroom’s welcome ! ’ ”

And he advanced towards her ; but the armed hand of the victim rose promptly in her defence.

“ Three steps nearer,” she cried, “ and God judge betwixt thee and me ! ”

“ Aye, Lady ! ” said the Baron, “ still ‘ *joute a l’outrance* ? ’ still thirsting to amend thy botched work of the tourney night ? still panting to shed blood ? ”

“ Not *thine*,” she answered, “ ruffian as thou art. I leave thee to Him in whose hand are life and death, seasons, and times, and vengeance. I have another and a fairer mark for

this kind steel; and my hand shall not tremble—my heart shall not fail. Advance thy foot but three paces towards me, and I will show thee, Braggart, that Constance de Mowbray is *not* thine; that her pure soul can fly as far from thy base desires as the height of its native heaven from the depth of thy native hell; that even her feeble body shall defy a touch of thy finger, until her own hand hath stricken it cold and ghastly, a clod, bloodless and breathless! I could not kill *thee*, Reginald de Lacy, but, thanks to my God who hath made me strong in the hour of need, I feel that, were there a thousand lives in this bosom, I have strength now to strike through them all!”

“Be still! rash, pious fool!” exclaimed De Lacy, hurriedly, and stepping three paces *back* instead of forward, “be still, and hear me!”

“I will hear thee,” she replied, “for I seek not to destroy this gift of my Maker until thy brutality gives me law and warrant. But I will not hear thee *long*, lest weariness, and the lack of food and sleep, wear down the spirit of my resolve, and my hand be at last nerveless for the great blow of deliverance.”

“I will be passing brief,” said the Baron; “mark! thou hast shed my blood; wert thou a

man, *blood* should repay it ; but, as thou art, and young, and beautiful, and proud of heart, I must avenge me after other sort. I swear to thee, by heaven and earth, thou shall be mine this night, and in this chamber ! but “(he added, stepping back three paces more)” I will swear to thee, also, by whatsoever oath thou wilt, that if thou art wise to keep thine own counsel and go hence smilingly, I, for mine own poor part, will deal full knightly with thee, *and make no boast*. Thou shalt be free to wed De Albe-marle, and queen it as he lists ; and then shall no man in the realm doff his bonnet and bend the knee with lowlier grace and seemliness than *your right trusty and most loyal Reginald of Newark*.”

Constance made no answer. She had heard enough ere he had spoken half ; and her thoughts were now far off ; in commerce with higher things and natures, she saw only “white-robed Faith, pointing, with golden rod,” to the mansions where good spirits have no terror of the evil. At length the solemn vision melted, and she renewed, for a few sad links, the broken chain of earthly thoughts and sorrows.

“Miserable being !” she said, “thou art the last of human things these eyes shall look upon

—and I will not curse thee. Live; and may God in his own good time give thee remorse and pardon! For me,” she added, looking upward, and fervently kissing the cross of the dagger-hilt, “*my* strife with human sin and suffering is well-nigh over. Yet, but a moment’s prayer for one I love, and—all is well.”

A strange, unwonted, reluctant, misgiving feeling, came over De Lacy.

“It is impossible!” he cried, “thou canst not mean it—thou canst not strike—thou knowest not the black shadows of the terrors of death!”

“If it be so,” said Constance, “I am the stronger to embrace it. In peace—in joy—in the gladness of my childhood, I have thought of it with terror and with shrinking; but not *now*. The blackness of its shadows is upon me, but, through them all, I see the brightness of my God! the glory of my Redeemer!”

“A dream of monks and priests!” said Reginald, “if thou hadst ever looked on death——”

“I have:” she replied, “not as thou and thy fellow-warriors look upon it, in battle fields, where slaughter is fame and honour—where rage of heart makes cruelty a pastime; and blood is sweeter than wine to the fleshed soldier that pours it forth. Nor as ye see it upon the after-

couch of horror, in prisons, and in castles, when pain hath brought low the terrible, and sickness hath broken the lance and shield; and when the memory of a thousand crimes shakes the departing wretch into delirium! *Thus* have I *not* seen death. But I have seen the last hour of the good and gentle. I beheld the last glance of my sainted mother, and it was bright with joy and faith! I listened to her last sigh, and it was calm as a sleeping infant's. Oh, that her pure spirit may even now be hovering near, rejoicing that I am strong in innocence to open this dreadful door from thy cruel baseness!"

"A dreadful door, indeed!" said De Lacy, astonished at her resolution; "and whither leading? ha! knowest thou *that*? priest-gulled pretty one!"

"I do," was the solemn answer; "It leads, Reginald de Lacy, 'to where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest!' Tarry now, or depart—approach, or fall back—as ye list; I fear thee not—I trust thee not—I go, as I have said, proud man; but my last act shall be one of love and charity. I warn thee, with dying lips, that, in these caves, *thy* moments, too, are numbered! Here the Avenger of the Saxons keeps watch and rule, and here, cunning

and fierce, artful and cruel alike, he awaits but thy guilty triumph over a child of his hated foe, De Mowbray, to fall, like thunder, upon thy neck ! the toils are set around thee—the dungeon is prepared. Tarry, if thou wilt, till my blood be poured ; but, if thou canst, then fly ; away ! away ! for thy life, from this grave of many a Norman ! Hurry to thine own powers, if they be near ; or, better yet, to Tynemouth, and return with armed help to those who will else perish in the dungeons beneath us. There are three Normans—noble and knightly—thrust to die ;—*one*—but that is o'er ! oh, Reginald ! thou to whom earthly honour is all in all, even for that fierce pride which is dear to thee, let not the wild ocean gain its flood-mark, till thou hast broken, with the hand of rescue, into those murderous dens ! If thou dost this, may the lives which thou shalt save, expiate, in the sight of God, *my* death, and every slaughter thou has committed on man or woman ! ”

There was something dreadful to the fierce Norman in the last allusion, whether random or designed. He began, too, to feel that, without any diminution of his guilt, but rather, a consummation more horrid, his prey was actually about to elude him. He recoiled slowly to the

very door of the vault, muttering, "De Mowbray from crown to toe! from crown to toe!" then, writhing for a minute with contending passions, he cried aloud—

"Girl! girl! am I not a *man*, although a stern one? and to be won, perchance, by long beseeching? art thou a woman, and canst not dash thee down, and rend thine hair? hast thou nor cry nor shriek? tear nor entreaty?"

"None," replied the Enthusiast, "*their* time is past, and *mine*. I hope nothing—I entreat nothing from thee. No, not even to give burial to these poor limbs! for, if the Avenging Se-Blaca speak sooth, there is *that* stretched even here between us, which tells how vain have been the prayer, the cry, the shriek of woman to thee! *that* which, in the dark words of thine accuser, might now shake even *thy* iron heart within thee! a token dug from earth 'of the fair-haired and the bright-eyed of other days!'"

She ceased—pointing to the couch before her; and the Baron, like one goaded to sudden phrensy, stamped his mailed foot with mingled rage and horror. But, in the next instant, the latter feeling absorbed all others, for the oaken cover of the pallet suddenly fell off, and the hand of a skeleton—the long thin bones, which had

once been fingers—the fingers of a *woman*, were thrust forth, as if in ghastly attestation of the crime that had so stripped them of their once beautiful and sentient covering.

Let us not deprave, with poor and vulgar mysticism, a legitimate scene of terrors—the genuine terrors of human passion and suffering. It was the Dwarf Puckist who bore this apparently supernatural part in the drama. Fear, when Se-Blaca returned, and perhaps the hope of being yet serviceable to Constance, had driven him to seek a hiding-place even *there*. He remembered the superstitious alarm of De Lacy upon a former occasion, amidst the buttress-shadows of Newan Mynstre, and he knew enough of the Baron and his imputed crimes to calculate the effect of that ghastly greeting at a moment so dreadfully opportune. But oh! the withering paralysis of guilt! when a poor abortion, the very jest of man and scorn of woman, could shake the soul of a haughty Norman warrior!

“ Thus oft it haps that, when within,
We shrink at sense of secret sin,
A feather daunts the brave!
A fool’s wild speech confounds the wise,
And proudest princes veil their eyes
Before their meanest slave!”

Reginald clasped his hands upon his eyes, as if a spirit had risen before him ; and when, after a moment's irrepressible horror, his desperation withdrew them again, and he saw, standing near the pallet, the same low, dark, shapeless thing which he had chased in vain by Newan Mynstre, his terror was extreme ; it literally rooted him to the earth ; while its object, gliding past the Lady with something like a beckoning motion, raised the folds of the arras and disappeared.

It was then that Constance saw, if not a hope of life, at least a *choice* of death ; and, almost instantly, a sound from without determined her. Puckfist had finished, even at the eleventh hour, the work of excavation ; and there was now another, and perhaps less revolting, wicket opened for her escape. Darting under the hangings, and forcing herself painfully through the narrow breach they concealed, the desperate girl soon placed her unshrinking foot upon the outer ledge of the cliff—looked for an instant to sea and sky—commended her soul to God, and then plunged headlong into the booming waters below !

“ How looked our hermit when the deed was done ? ”

Rage and shame conquered superstition. He

rushed to the hidden aperture—it was too narrow for his bulky form, even could he have dared the tremendous leap beyond—so loaded with heavy armour. But, by violent efforts, he succeeded in stretching his head partially over the outer verge, and looked down as a miser looks upon his dropped casket, or a wild beast upon the prey that has escaped him. It was the grey of morning; and he saw the body of his victim emerge for a few moments from the foam; he saw it again sink, and again rise; and then, upon the curl of a large wave, drive shoreward with a fury that, he doubted not, would dash her lifeless upon the beach, to be sucked back by the insatiate Deep with its next recoiling billow!

With difficulty he dragged himself again upon his feet, in the dull vault. The cold light of the dawn streamed faintly in. The lamp was in its last glimmer. The fearful pallet was at his side, and he could not bound over it in returning, as he had done in his advance. A horrible fascination drew his gaze into its hollow; and his flesh crept upon every bone as he beheld how ghastlily it was tenanted! *There* lay the skeleton of his murdered wife, once buried by Se-Blaca, but dug up, to bear its part in the general horrors, when the murderer was expected upon

his base mission to Constance. It lay clothed in the very garments she had worn when the hand of the loved and trusted one struck her to the heart! that heart so true, and warm, and tender! They were her *bridal garments*, and even their first lustre had not passed away before the bridegroom's dagger stained them with the crimson of her own pure blood! Had he been marble itself, the sight had shaken him! *there* were the rayless sockets in which eyes of surpassing beauty once beamed—beamed, oh! how tenderly upon *him!* *there* had once “hung the lips he had kissed, he knew not how oft!” *there* were the bony wrecks of the hands he had pressed so fondly!—of the sweet bosom that had pillowed him!—of the lovely cheek that had been pillowed upon his!

“O God! were those the lovely limbs that * * * *”

He gazed, with irrepressible awe and loathing; yet dared not look away from the mouldering ghastliness;—nor stoop to cover it;—nor even turn his eye towards the door, which he would have given half his Barony to fly through without the delay of unlocking! At last, dizzied with

* Goethe, *Faust*.

remorse and terror, the spectacle swam before him ; it seemed as if the dry bones moved and would arise. He started—shook off the dreadful trance with an effort as dreadful ; fled out of the chamber of horror with the speed of one who flies from a pursuing spectre ; and, as he rushed along the gloomy passages, his heart beat as though its throbs would burst his mail, and drops of terror gushed upon his brow, like foam upon a flying charger !

CHAPTER VIII.

“ Ha ! total night and horror here preside—
My stunned ear tingles to the whizzing tide !
It is their funeral knell ! and, gliding near,
Methinks the phantoms of the dead appear ! ”

The Shipwreck.

THE passage along which De Lacy fled had no outlet except through the chamber of Adelaide. The door was closed and fast. There was no sound. He knocked violently with his sword-hilt, and it was opened by Se-Blaca.

The Saxon looked in the ghastly face of his visitor, and, however ignorant of *one* cause of his emotion, readily guessed the other. The Norman, too, upon his part, caught the glance of triumph which told him that his torture was a joy to his savage host ; and, instantly, the conviction flashed upon him that Constance had warned him justly—that *he* too was condemned. His fierce spirit

half resumed its energies with the thought ; and he determined that the purchase of his life should be as a bargain for the skin of the living wolf.

“ How now,” cried Se-Blaca, “ stabbed yet again ?”

“ Aye—no—why art thou watching here ?” replied the Baron, wildly.

“ Why, rather, art *thou* here ?” was the counter-question—“ what wouldst thou ?”

“ Fire and air—food and wine ! these, and speedily, for thy life, Saxon !”

“ Am I thy hewer of wood, and drawer of water ?”

“ To hell with thee and water ! *wine*, I say ! wine—wine ! and *fire*, though the great fiend hew the billets !”

“ Why, mighty Norman,” said the Saxon, with malignant coolness, “ what ails thee ?”

“ Much—I am weary of thy caverns, and of thee. My blood is chilled. Thy chambers are graves !”

“ *Graves* !” iterated Se-Blaca—“ How fares it with the Lady ?”—

“ Well ! never so well. Lacking nor wine *nor water* !—She is gone !”

“ Gone ? whither ?”

“Whither thou canst not follow. To her Father.”

“Her Father!”

“Ay!—her Father ‘*which is in Heaven,*’—if thou believest in such.”

“Dead!” said the half-startled Saxon: “Ha! *couldst* thou—but why ask! blood will have blood—and thou art a Norman and—a De Lacy.”

“And thou a Saxon, and a Devil! her chamber was a charnel!—”

“Did’st look upon the bones?” said Wolfsic, and he spoke with an ill-disguised enjoyment of what he inflicted, which was, indeed, devilish. But had De Lacy known how to find egress from those dreadful vaults, or felt assured that it was even possible for him to do so, *that* moment had been the last of the Avenger of the Saxons!—As it was, ignorant by what and by whom surrounded; in a labyrinth which he had entered blindfold; it was necessary perhaps to employ artifice and quiet intimidation rather than sudden violence. He constrained himself, therefore, to answer with calm scorn,

“Bones? what be thy bones to me? there let them rot!”

But the words were scarcely uttered when it

seemed as if a voice from the dead reproached him. It was a groan—hollow and full of anguish—the last of many such—from the lips of the yet painfully breathing Adaleve.

A cold tremor crept through De Lacy. Se-Blaca turned to the couch; and his stern sister, Wynfreda, bent low over the pillow of the dying, and with a strained ear, caught her last accents, “ ‘ *Forgive and spare.* ’ ”

With these sole-expiating sounds—the haunting words of her last earthly dream—the weary spirit shook off the load of life, and was at rest.

“ She is gone ! ” said Wynfreda. And Wolf-sic, lowering the lamp, and laying his hand upon her cold and pulseless bosom, knew that it was indeed so—that the last pang was over.

“ Here is more death,” he said, turning to Reginald; “ more food for the charnel—*this* chamber is also a grave.”

“ Whose grave ? ” said De Lacy.

“ The grave of one who was once mightier than the mightiest of thy Norman kin,” answered Se-Blaca, seating himself beside the dead. “ These wretched limbs, upon this wretched pallet, were once lovely and delicate, and proudly clad, and pressed the down of princely couches, in chambers of kingly pride ! ”

Maidens, to whom those of the best of Norman blood were but as the daughters of churls, took pride to tend upon her. A thousand vassals feasted at her board. A thousand warriors drew the bow at her command!—But thou, and thine, great Baron! thee and such as thee, thy Bastard-King and his robber-captains, came with their conquering thousands, and—behold! for the castled strength of Bamborough, these hideous vaults! for pride, and power, and luxury—misery, want, and death!”

The picture he drew exasperated him.

“Awake!” he exclaimed, in louder and wilder tones, “Daughter and wife of mighty Thaness! widow of murdered Sigeric! awake! arise! the gaze of the insulting Norman is upon thee!”

“Awake THOU, and arise!” said Wynfreda. “A woman’s corpse, let a woman mourn. Thou art a man. Sit not to watch the *limbs*—arise and do the *will* of the dead! Heard ye not her last words—‘FORGIVE NOT—SPARE NOT!’?”

The malignant crone looked away from the corpse, and spoke low and brokenly as she uttered the dreadful falsehood. But it sank deep into the soul of Wolfsic. He arose without a word, kindled a torch at the lamp, and beckoning De Lacy to follow him, strode across the chamber.

"Whither?" said the Norman, as they went out.

"Whither thou wilt," he replied; "forth of these caverns, which are aweary of thee as thou of them. Below is thy new King, Stephen of Albemarle!"

"Ha!" exclaimed the surprised Reginald, "What doth he here?"

"He prays the despised Saxon for aid against the tyrant William: for levies from our dens and holes—our mountains and our marshes—our fastnesses of morass—our strongholds of the forest and the reedy swamp. He hath *my* promise, and I *his*. Follow, and thou shalt learn our compact—but it would scantily help to make thee Chancellor or Justiciary in this new world, did the loving Stephen know after what fashion thou hast dealt in yonder chamber, with his plighted bride, Constance de Mowbray."

"Now, by heaven and hell," exclaimed the Baron, "if thou hast whispered even to the very winds that blow upon De Albemarle——"

"Peace, and follow," interrupted Wolfsic. "thy counsel is in thine own breast. Tell thine own tale, why thou art here, and fear not."

"*Fear!*" cried De Lacy—"but when goes he hence?"

“ When the tide is at highest,” said the Saxon. “ *Then, good Reginald De Lacy, I swear to thee, nor thou nor he shall choose but depart !*”

They forbore to speak, and passed on ; Wolfsic showing the path,

“ By winding stair, dark aisle, and secret nook,”

De Lacy with his hand upon a poniard, and his sword loosened in its scabbard, ready to resist, or at least, to revenge treachery. At last appeared another of the many low dungeon-like entrances we have described.

“ Within,” said Se-Blaca, as he applied the key, “ there is a captive. Why should he eat his heart in solitude ? I will release him to ye without a ransom, for the love of the princely Stephen, and his great ally De Mowbray.”

He unlocked and thrust open the wicket ; and, in a cavity of a few feet square, stretched upon the cold rock—worn and haggard, but alive, De Lacy saw the prisoner. He saw, too, that it was Raymond.

The torch light, and the grating sound of the door, startled the youth from his sad slumbers. He rose—looked in the countenances of both visitors, and doubted not that he was

indeed to be liberated,—through the gates of death.

De Lacy, and Se-Blaca were alike heedful not even to cross the threshold of the vault; but the latter waved its pallid inmate to come forth. He obeyed, with a firmer step and more erect gait than his sunken cheek and narrow dungeon could have promised.

Thus increased, the little party proceeded without a word, until they reached that gloomy hall which had so chilled the spirits of Du Coci with its spectral terrors. The glaring torch now shewed in stronger relief than the Dwarf's lamp those dismal emblems of mortality that upon every hand stood like phantoms or lay like effigies, and had a ten-fold hideousness from the distortion of the rude mechanism by which the members of each were attached and supported.

De Lacy looked around him with renewed disgust, and could not help exclaiming,

“ Mary-mother! what loathly things be these?”

“ The bones of men,” said the Host. “ Of *men*,” he repeated significantly—“ therefore be not afraid. They are mute and peaceful now, these fleshless things! they swear not, neither do they stab. It is good for us to look upon

them, and *to remember*. Is it not so, good youth?" turning to Raymond, with a grin scarcely less ghastly than that of the skeleton-things around him.

"It is good for us to remember the dead;" said Raymond, calmly,—“and that we too must die; some in the peaceful bed, as *thou* wilt never do,—some on the battle-field, as *I* had once a hope,—some in dens of treachery, as perchance *these* have done, and I (if it be thy pleasure and De Lacy's) may speedily do. It is good, doubtless, to remember all this, but *thou*, Saxon, who wert once a monk, shouldst remember also, ‘dust to dust, ashes to ashes.’ The grave is the dead man's castle and sanctuary, and the living should take shame to plunder it.”

“Bones of my fathers!” cried the Baron, “it is well said! thrust me these grinning jaws and mouldering shanks into their earth-holes, and be the hand accursed that digs them up again! Pah! let us hence—the air is dank and heavy with their rottenness!”

“Tarry,” said Se-Blaca, “these bones are the skeletons of Worthies who craved better things at *my* hands than to be thrust into forgotten graves. *Normans all*,—warriors and priests! I have toiled and bled to make them mine, and

snatched them from corruption and the worm to range them *here* ; as other halls and bowers have for their adornment the things of chiselled marble and painted cloth. *These*, these are the statues and the lymnings which pleasure *me* ! these, indeed, keep fresh in my remembrance the *hands* that grasped, the *feet* that trampled—no matter upon whom or what. See ! they that were mighty warriors I have propped erect, as when, in rage of heart, they defied man and God ! and they that were shaven priests I have laid along in meek humbleness, as when they stretched themselves in prayer, by the altars from whence with fire and sword they had driven the Saxon ! — Look,” he added, pointing to the nearest ; “*this* peaceful, prostrate thing, was once Robert of Limoges, a holy Bishop of Lichfield, if ye be well remembered. Here do I honour him for breaking with the strong and the crimson hand into a Saxon abbey in Coventry, driving the brethren forth to starve and rot ; and, with the plunder of their coffers, and the ore of their melted plate, building him up a stately pleasure-house ! behold ! he is *here* ! — *This*,” touching another, was the pious and gentle Remi of Fescamp—he, too, for a boon of fifty boats to the great Norman Duke that would

be King, became a Bishop and a Tyrant, and, for a thousand wrongs to the Saxon, is honoured *here* and *thus*.—*Here*," indicating a third, "was another of the holy ones of Fescamp—Red-handed Torrauld, a mitred Abbot, for his zeal to shed the blood of the Saxons. Better he loved the battle-axe than the crozier, and therefore did the mighty Bastard give him rule over a convent at Peterborough, near the camp of the rebel Saxons, that, while the priestly lover of cruelty damned himself with slaughter, he might, at least, give pleasure and profit to his King. There was he slain by a Saxon shaft, and there did I treasure up his bones!—These," passing to a fourth and fifth, "were once the charitable Guerin de Liri, and the ruthless Paul of Caen, of whose souls, next to the pouring out of innocent blood, the sweetest delight was to tear from their quiet sepulchres* the bodies of the Saxon Abbots who had gone before them, and, piling them, like filth, upon a heap, to burn them with fire beyond the abbey-gates! *Their* graves, Sir Squire, were neither castles nor sanctuaries to the poor sleepers! and

* The reader must observe that all these little amiable instances, cited with such unction by Se-Blaca, are *historical matter-of-fact*: "Fiction is strange—truth is stranger."

therefore did I *steal these* bones, and here do I give them honour!——But look!” pointing to a sixth; “this—*this* was the beloved of the great Norman Conqueror! the Norman Priest after the Norman Tyrant’s heart! sleek Tonstain of Glastonbury! who, with the strong arm of power, thrust from his long held abbacy the aged Saxon, Egelnorth, to wander in sickly eld, and pine and perish for lack of bread! Full jolly priest was Tonstain! a lover of holy glee-craft after the fresh fashion of the Normans; and when his monks (who loved the old Gregorian chaunt) sang not to the delight of his dainty ear, he stamped with his mailed foot, and cried aloud for his armed vassals* to shoot, and stab, and spear them, even by the altar of God, until their blood streamed down the holy steps to the chancel pavement!——And lo!” advancing to a seventh, “lo, yet again! this bulky wreck was once the body of William, Bishop of Hereford. Mark, noble Baron of Newark! the kisses of a thousand delicate ones could not now redden these bony cheeks with a pleasant touch, or put lascivious fire into these gaping sockets! yet *he* was the

* “A moi! mes hommes d’armes!”

lustiest of the wanton, and died by the weak hand of a virgin, to whom, in his hot mood——”

De Lacy broke upon the ill-timed tale by such a grasp of the Saxon’s arm as might have cracked the very sinews of one less hardy.

“Enough of thy filthy bone-house!” he cried; “pass forth, in God’s name, and speed us hence.”

“Be it so,” rejoined the Saxon, “*the tide will speedily be at full.*”

Quitting the hall of skeletons, they were soon in the very passage along which Se-Blaca had conducted his recent victims. They paused at the same terminating outlet, and heard the same rushing of wind and wave, but louder. The door was again unbarred and opened. It *had been* so *once*, at least, *since* closing upon De Almarle and Du Coci; for there was now a fresh plank stretching from the brink of the chasm, by the door, over to the reef that, about half-way across, served as a pier to the rude bridge. They passed it singly; Se-Blaca first and Raymond last.

“A grim fortress thine!” cried De Lacy, “with fosses running betwixt its very chambers! a frail bridge, too, methinks; and I remember me, Saxon, thou art but an evil Bridge-ward.”

"At times, great Baron," was the reply, "to serve *thee*. But, frail or firm, this bridge must serve us for both fosses."

They drew it up accordingly, and, with their joint strength, succeeded in over-laying one end to the edge of the rock beyond ; a distance, perhaps, of twelve feet ; the tide, as Se-Blaca had said, now fast rising to its height, rushing and eddying with great violence beneath.

Guide and torch bearer as before, the Avenger still took the lead. He passed in safety to *terra firma* ; but with no intention that the steps of others should do so. The result, indeed, may be guessed !

The instant he pressed the solid rock with *one* foot, with the *other* he spurned the plank heavily down into the billows ! the torch followed, and all was darkness. Then came the clang of the secret grating by which he had escaped, and, when it struck the ears of the betrayed Normans, they found themselves islanded upon a point of rock little more than sufficient to give them standing room ; without a ray of light ; and unable to stir a foot, except at peril of falling headlong into unknown depths, through which the surges were rushing in full career !

For some moments they doubted the treachery which had snared them. They called; but no answer returned from their Betrayer; and, though replying sounds seemed indeed to come from beneath, they were confused with those of wind and wave and echo. Still, the listeners fancied human tones, indistinct from distance as well as other causes; and while De Lacy vented one fearful imprecation upon another, Raymond calmly suggested that nothing remained for them but to attempt a descent, and, following the supposed voices, find the inlets by which the tide searched the caverns. Strong swimmers might thus escape to the open beach, and, once there, Tynemouth lay near, both for refuge and revenge.

There was no alternative. Hunger, darkness, the dizzying whirl and rush below, would in a short time topple them down, willing or unwilling. De Lacy, therefore, abandoned the greater part of his armour, and they descended—slowly, painfully, and with such strain upon nerve and muscle as only those who clamber in darkness and in danger can describe.

At last, they plunged into the waters, and were dashed from side to side by the strong surges, until, by dint of hard swimming, strug-

gling, scrambling, wading, and every species of toil, over sunken ridges, and through craggy arches, the "forth-rights and meanders" of the tide, they saw, once more, the welcome glimmering of day.—But why dilate upon these cavern-horrors, and chain the reader also amongst them, until weariness deepen to disgust? let us be brief. They saw light, indeed, and heard nearer voices, and clambered to where those who had preceded them in mishap, wearied with fruitless exertions, stood now upon the highest ledge of rock they could command, to rest, at least, their weary arms—*stood*, we say, for, even then, the rising waters were already above their waists. It was thus that the four victims encountered; but the last comers had the worst to learn from their companions; namely, that all egress by the craggy mouths through which the tide rushed was *impossible*—forbidden by massy iron-bars socketted in the rock above and beneath! This the Earl and Du Coci had ascertained, and were now awaiting only the full flow of the strangling waters.

It was horror, which nothing but the fierce ingenuity of Hate could have devised! and to which only the pencil of "Nature's sternest painter" could do justice—

“ Again they joined in one long powerful cry—
Then ceased—and eager listened for reply—
None came ; the rising wind blew sadly by.
They shout once more—and then they turn aside,
To see how quickly flows the coming tide !
Between each cry they find the waters steal
On their strange prison, and new terrors feel.

Fast rose the surges o’er the lessening strand,
And they seemed sinking while they yet could stand.
Bleak and more bleak, more wet, more cold it grew,
And the most lively bade to Hope adieu !
Less and yet less the sinking rocks became,
And there was rage and wailing ! wrath and blame ! ”

No ! *wailing* there was not. Even the worst tempered spirit amongst them was too indomitable for *that*. And the time for *rage* was nearly gone by. Yet, between the intervals of silent agony—perhaps of prayer and penitential thought with some—hands were clenched in sudden paroxysms ; and teeth were grinded ; and half-formed curses half-uttered ; with vain wishes for help, and for the strength of furies to break their bars, or rend asunder the rocks ! for the power to breathe under the billows till the next ebb—for anything that was most vain—idle—remote—impossible ! anything rather than die a death so miserable—so inglorious and obscure !

But it was fast approaching, and there was no hope!

None could reproach, or attempted to reproach, another; but again and again did each exclaim to each, "Oh! that thou had'st stabbed him to the heart! cleft him to the brain!"

Then, as their span grew narrower, some object, dearest to each, arose with poignant vividness; tugged at the heart-strings; rivetted them to earth and life; called distractedly back "those thoughts which wandered through eternity;" and cried, as it were, to the sick bosom, "O! had it not been for *this*!"

Raymond endured without one audible paroxysm; yet, bitterly, bitterly did he think of his lost Constance! and when the memory of past dreams of ambition, as well as love, came darkly across him, there came with it, as if uttered but an hour before, the first threats of "the Invisible of the Forest," that "the last of a mighty line should perish *as in a cleft of the rock*, where Honour looked not upon Death, and the voice of Praise was silent for ever!"

The spirit of De Albemarle, too, turned to Constance, for his love had been no idle passion; but he had also to brood over a lost kingdom.

"Is *this* my victory and my realm! *This* my throne! From the dungeon to the grave," he repeated again and again, "one step for a Prince!"

The savage Reginald looked back upon a thousand crimes; and never before had the retrospect been so dreadful. "Hell was moved at his coming," and seemed to send forth its impatient phantoms with multiplying and anticipating terrors. Yet Pride grappled to the last with impenitent Remorse; and he continued, in horrible iteration, to vent the same unvarying curse upon his betrayer.

Du Coci alone, light-hearted to the last, uttered neither sorrow nor malediction. He left none to mourn except his trusty squire; and his deepest regret was uttered when he had exclaimed, "Ah, my poor Nicholas! I would that, before this, thou had'st either won gilt spurs in a pitched field, or gone back to comfort the grey hairs of Jodesac in the Jewry!"

The waters were now breast high around them. Every wave rose nearer to their lips, and dashed its salt spray into their faces with more blinding fury. The little light that glimmered at first was nearly all shut out by the rising wall of waters. The sea-mew clapt his heavy

wing unheard near the barred mouths of their tomb. They saw, they heard, nothing that spoke of life. Had they been *giants*, it would not have availed, for the low roof allowed none to stand erect; and quite as vain would have been the skill of the strongest swimmer, when the whole caverned space was filled with the strangling waters!

All but De Lacy interchanged forgiveness and farewell; and then there was the silence of the brave and the proud, who meet Death at last without a sound of wail or fear.

Another minute—another wave—and—hark!

“God in heaven!” exclaimed De Albemarle, “there is help!”

Oh, how dear, how sweet, how joyful, that blessed word!

Just as he uttered it, the single sound he had caught, was followed by a cry of many voices, so loud and shrill that it seemed to the imprisoned as if *that* alone had broken their prison bars!

They *screamed*, rather than shouted in reply, as men who scream from the jaws of death; and then, clang after clang, came the tremendous blows of the huge hammers of Tynemouth armoury, as (in boats rocking by the nearest cavern mouth) the forge-men swung them like

very Cyclops ! Away, in a few seconds, like lances shivered in the charge, went every bar ! The captives swam, with the strength of mingled hope and desperation, into broad ocean and broad day ! They were taken up half dead with exertion, cold, and despair, and rowed to a bark in the offing ; and when Raymond, more exhausted, perhaps, than his companions, cleared his eyes from the salt surf, the first object he beheld upon the deck was Puckfist, the dwarf ; the next was De Mowbray, of Northumberland.

CHAPTER IX.

“Blest power of sunshine ! genial day !
What balm—what life is in thy ray !
To feel thee is such real bliss,
That had the world no joy but this,
To sit in sunshine warm and sweet,
It were a world too exquisite
For man to leave it for the gloom,
The deep cold shadow of the tomb !”

Lalla Rookh.

“THAT there was an ancient priory at Tyne-mouth is certain. Its ruins are situated on a high rocky point, and doubtless many a vow was made to the shrine by the distressed mariners who drove towards the iron-bound coast of Northumberland in stormy weather.”

So says the mighty Master of Romance departed ; and never, we believe, did the towers of St. Oswyn, in the worst storm, look down upon mariners or landsmen, who had more reason to feel religiously thankful than some upon the deck of the little vessel that, bearing merrily away from Marston, before a whistling breeze, rounded, in a few minutes, the vast promontory upon which

they are based. Few, indeed, had ever been snatched more wonderfully from the jaws of the great Deep, and if the recovered victims looked with grateful awe to the shrine of the local saint, whose tutelary good-will they might conceive instrumental in saving them, it was, then at least, a very pardonable superstition.

And, oh! how beautiful did the grey towers—the rocks—the sands—the fisher-sheds—the meanest objects seem to those eyes upon which the gloom of Se-Blaca's caverns had lain for hours with a weight like that of the valley of the shadow of death! The wind blew balmily from the joyous south-west*. The dull cold "*fret*" of the preceding day was gone; the blue sky laughed out in the full joy of its summer beauty; and the morning sun blazed with unsurpassed splendour over land and main, cresting the purple clouds and billows with flashes of golden glory, and lighting up even the else dull shores and savage rocks with gleams of yellow lustre.

We said that Raymond caught a glance of Earl de Mowbray. It was but for an instant, as the latter descended with De Albemarle and

* "Blaw the wind southerly, southerly, southerly!

Blaw the wind southerly, south and south-west!"

Melodies of the Tyne and Wear.

De Lacy to the cabin, and he did not even feel assured that *he* was seen by the Earl—yet, at that moment, did a presentiment of evil fall like a sudden shadow across his mind—a misgiving as to his reception by him for whom he had dared, and toiled, and suffered so much.

The human heart is, no doubt, superstitious—prone to hearken to false oracles ; but, it must be allowed, possesses often a wonderful power of true divination. Who has not observed with what occult subtlety it sometimes takes a warning or a presentiment, almost amounting to conviction, from things which, in themselves, have not the weight or the validity of straws? detecting the first faintly-approaching dimness of those shadows which, according to the poet, coming events project before them?

The “*mauvais presage*” hung so heavily upon Raymond that, notwithstanding all he had to communicate, he felt a repugnance to follow De Mowbray, or to request an interview. Their short voyage (about three miles) gave little time for hesitation. The cabin conclave re-appeared ; and it seemed to him as if care was taken that neither himself nor Du Coci should accompany them in disembarking. Neglected they certainly were not ; but the attentions paid were so equi-

vocal that it might well be questioned whether they formed the ceremonial of attendance, or of custody. Raymond looked in the face of his companion, but read nothing there to reassure him.

They landed in the little bay still called Prior's Haven—Raymond and Sir Alberic last ; and the latter saw that, upon the shore as upon the vessel deck, every head bowed and every knee bent, as the great Earls passed along the beach. Short as was the distance, horses were provided for these magnates, and for the Baron of Newark ; and so, while the Knight of the Broken Lance and the Squire of the Heart of Steel followed humbly on foot, guarded rather than conducted, the party entered, amidst acclamations and minstrelsy and trumpet-peals, the massy walls of Tynemouth—

“ Half church of God—half castle 'gainst the Scot.”

The gateway still stands by which they entered ; a tower nearly square, with a circular exploratory turret at each corner. But how changed is all within ! The whole area, of perhaps six acres, presents only scattered masses of ruin, graceful and solemn, but so shattered and disunited, that even fifty years ago an antiquary in vain attempted to assign each remnant

to an individual office ; while modern buildings, a barrack, and a light-house, and gravestones of recent erection, recal the mind to the living and the dead of our own age. There are, however, the remains of cloisters, and of a magnificent church, and every where masses of foundation, which speak plainly the great extent of superstructure they once supported.

Far other was the scene that met the eye of Du Coei, when the vast unimpaired edifice, redeemed from every mark of elementary and Danish fury, stood in crowded magnificence, at once a palace, a fortress, and a monastery.

They passed a deep outward fosse, over a drawbridge defended by moles on either hand, and then the gateway described above ; a two-fold entrance, the huge tower comprehending an outward and interior portal, both with double gates, six feet apart ; and the former with a portcullis and an open gallery. The space betwixt the gateways was a square of about six paces, open above, to allow those on the battlemented top the power of annoying assailants who might gain the first pass. From this main entrance a strong double wall extended on both hands to the sea-rocks, which, in some places, especially on the north and east, had an almost

perpendicular fall of, perhaps, ten fathoms. So that the defences, natural and artificial, were alike exceedingly strong." Built, indeed, to defy the fury both of the elements and of man,

"Winds, waves, and northern pirates' hands."

the monastery itself was, originally, a powerful structure ; but De Mowbray, immediately upon taking a hostile position with Rufus, had rendered it nearly impregnable by every possible addition and modification.

The court-yard and outward walls, in fact, presented a scene of astonishment to Raymond. All was military bustle and preparation. Every sound and sight, and there were many, spoke of anticipated battle and siege ; and had not an occasional brace of monks, with their dark gowns and hoods, entering or issuing from the cloisters, recalled at times the idea of a convent, it might well have been lost in that of a strong castle about to be beleaguered by a determined enemy. On all sides, but especially on the landward, hundreds of craftsmen and artisans were busily occupied either in the construction or erection of vast propelling machines, such as formed the artillery of the period. For the easy moving and working of these along the

walls, immense platforms were building, with flights of steps at intervals for ready and rapid ascent ; and there might be seen, (their names as savage as their office), every variety of the Balistæ and Catapulta species ; the Mangonel, the Onegar, the Trebuchet, and the Petrary ; the Verge, the War-wolf, the Ribaudequin, and the Bricolle ; the Mate-griffin, the Matafunda, the Scorpion, and the Espringal. Some of these delicate engines were for hurling huge stones ; some, immense beams and stakes ; some, for both missiles, and, when occasion served, even the bodies of men and horses. It was abundant occupation for many labourers, to bring in or prepare the shot for these machines ; to collect the stones, and sharpen the stakes and bolts. A hubbub of sounds, therefore, little savouring of the monastic, arose from all sides. There was the heaving of armourers' bellows, and the clank of their vast hammers ; and the jarring of sword and battle-axe upon grindstones ; and the hurrying to and fro of the Fletcheur's (or arrow-maker's) men ; and the arrival and departure of couriers ; and the entrance of wains, loaded with forage and supplies ; and the marshalling of retainers, by newly-arrived tenants ; and the practise of military games, by young cavaliers,

“*en pupillage*” to the grim Men-at-arms, who, in the least encumbered places, managed their Flemish steeds, or breathed their lighter hackneys ; and tilted, and flung the mace, and bur-nished their arms ; and made the grey walls ring with shout, and laugh, and song, and the clang of steel.

In the midst of all this uproar, loudest of the loud, and busiest of the busy, was the un-venerable, but most stout and stalwart, Prior Baldwin ; the same burly Ecclesiastic for whose warlike propensities, and love of the carnal weapon, Earl Mowbray had incurred the censure and denunciations of Anselm, the Primate. Raymond, indeed, to whom the philippic had been uttered, and who, it may be remembered, had done his best to defend the accused, could not help contrasting the present spectacle with that picture of cleric gentleness and humility, drawn by the fervent Archbishop in the garden of Newan Mynstre.

Too busy, now, in fact, was the worthy Baldwin, for alms or shrift—for bell or book ; and, in especial, much too busy to recognise his young friend, Raymond, who saw, at the first glance which met the Prior’s, that the latter was not disposed to receive greeting or reverence

from *him*. It was another of those evil signs which prefigured something dark and ungracious approaching. But every circumstance of their entry had a like unpromising, repulsive aspect; and Du Coci, who had, perhaps, expected to see his companion in immediate office and authority, was not slow to divine that some stars had fallen from the youth's sky.

"*Here, gentle Raymond,*" he said, "*I, doubtless, am a captive,—what art thou?*"

"*Forgotten, methinks,*"—was the answer. But Raymond needed little further to convince him that worse than forgetfulness was at hand, (if to a proud spirit worse can be), when, in the man-at-arms who commanded the conducting party, he recognised a fellow whom he had once punished for drunken insolence and misrule. If more *was* needed, it came speedily. As they waited, near the gate of the Keep, until final orders arrived for their disposal, he met the eye of his quondam fellow-Squire, Torfin Paganel, who, looking upon him without deigning to utter a word, passed to the court of guard, followed by several pages and retainers, and with a prodigious air of authority and consequence.

Raymond's insulted heart swelled up at the sight of the coward who had deserted him so

basely in his need; and the suspicion flashed upon him, that to the slanders of this miscreant he was probably indebted for his present cheerless reception. Alas! he little guessed that there was *another* within those walls, whose hatred was as great, and whose malice was infinitely more availing.

While yet lingering "upon the cold foot," he saw the object of his resentment reappear from the court of guard, mount a courser, and ride out at full speed; being dispatched to apprise the garrison, at "the New Castle," of the safety of De Albemarle.

They were conducted, at last, to an apartment, which was at least not a dungeon, for the grated windows looked out to the bright sky and glittering ocean. There were refreshments too, and some articles of dry clothing; but they heard bolts and bars without when the door closed upon them.

"Look, Raymond," said Du Coci. "I am come from Heaven's blessing into the warm sun. If De Albemarle bestir him not to deal generously, and to stand betwixt thy Lord and me in this evil day, I have but exchanged one door of death for another—the choking billow for the headsman's block."

He then, to the surprise and, indeed, sorrow of his companion, revealed, for the first time, his name and history; that portion of the latter, at least, which involved his deadly feud with De Mowbray—the accusal—the combat-trial—his defeat, and those threatening assurances, given of late by Montgomery, that the Earl of Northumberland retained so deadly a sense of the quarrel as to have sworn, at the high altar of Durham, that seven weeks should not elapse from the period of his rival's return to England, before the celebration of a death-mass for his soul in that very building.

This was a dark leaf to the astonished Squire; but not the only one he had to turn over. The whole out-break and progress of the rebellion, nay, every human transaction, private or political, had been as a shut book to him in Se-Blaca's dungeon; and when Sir Alberick recounted all that had passed, not omitting the fate of Constance, whom he supposed still in the narrow caverns of Marston, his listener paced the chamber as a wild animal paces its den.

Suddenly the door opened and De Albemarle appeared.

"Give me thy knee, Du Coci," he said, "and I will give thee life. It is forfeit else."

"To whom?" inquired the Knight, superfluously.

"De Mowbray," replied the Earl. "His foot is upon thy neck; and I have no power to thrust it thence, whilst thou art banded with the tyrant William. Thou, too, Raymond, art under shadow, and I have one speech for both; know me for your King, and do me homage even now; or take the horns of the altar, and the chance that follows!"

"I will take the horns of the great Devil first!" said the Knight bluntly. "Thou art Earl of Albemarle methinks, and a King's cousin, but no more *King* than I am Mahound of Tartary!"

"Be it so:" rejoined Stephen. "I grieve—for it was *my* Dwarf that led thee into yonder trap; but it was De Mowbray's vassals who drew thee forth, and I may not tear from his burning lip the vengeance he hath long thirsted for, while thou art a rebel to me—a traitor to the great cause of English freedom."

"Ah! Fiend take it!" cried Du Coci. "So ye *all* prate that would be Kings! It is nought with ye, at first, but smooth brow and gentle hand; and never a word of tax or talliage, wardship or forest-law, till ye be crowned in-

deed, and then the new lion hath longer and sharper claws than the old one. But it recks not. I have done homage, and I have sworn fealty to King William, and by St. Michael and St. George ! I will not break oath and faith for *twenty* lives, take them who list !”

“ Why — thou hast said,” answered De Albemarle, and then turned him for answer to Raymond.

“ There is no blot upon my faith,” said the youth — “ no flaw in my love, that De Mowbray should hold threat over my life ; nor that *thou*, Sir Earl, shouldst bid me indeed play the traitor and the rebel by swearing fealty to a pretender. Who made *thee* Sovereign Lord of England ? and who hath owned thee such ?”

“ God, and *thy* Sovereign Lord De Mowbray,” replied Stephen. “ He hath done me homage for his Earldom, and *thou*, of his banner and his household, art my subject. Confess it so, and, by St. Oswyn ! I will save thee from his anger, just or groundless. Kneel, and arise a Knight !”

“ I thank thee, De Albemarle,” said Raymond — “ but will not *so* purchase protection at the hand of living man. If slander hath blotted me from De Mowbray’s grace, set me

before him, brow to brow with my accuser, and upon the issue be life or death."

"I hear thee—I have heard ye both," said Stephen, "and call God to witness, that I have done what man could do. Farewell, *thy* blood, Du Coci, be upon thy head!"

"Amen," said the Knight, "if in the sight of God it rest not upon that of another! but tell me, I beseech thee, De Albemarle, how fares it with thy 'good Saxon ally Wolfsic-se-Blaca?'"

"As with the Devil that aids him, till the great day of compt," replied the Earl. "He hath escaped—mortal man knows not how, or whither. Puckfist, within this hour, hath led a chosen band through the windings of his web; and, in all those accursed dens and caves, *he*, nor the hag his sister, are to be found—the very corpse hath vanished! But I swear to thee, Alberic du Coci, if the Saxon caitiff press ground in realm of mine, thou shalt one day be avenged for *thy* share in the briny tortures of his dungeon."

He turned to depart—but, as the door opened, Raymond cried with an anxious abruptness,

"In God's name, tell me—what of the Lady Constance?"

“She lives!” replied the Earl, sternly, “and with *that* content thee, presumptuous fool!”

So saying, he disappeared.

“Cheer thee, Raymond!” said Alberic, after a melancholy pause.—“Cheer thee, Heart of Gold, as well as Steel! Priests say, that sparrows fall not to the ground without special note; and surely the worst of us twain is better worth than a whole forest-full of sparrows, and sparrow-hawks to boot! Never aught but good service hast *thou* done to Robert de Mowbray, and Slander can hardly *yet* have noosed a halter for thy neck. *My* sky hath a blacker cloud; but I have still hope. King or no king, De Albemarle is right noble, and his Kingship is cheap indeed if he hath not power over De Mowbray’s thirst for this poor life. There is the D  moiselle, too, the lovely Constance; *she*, methinks, should plead well—but,” he added, “should the worst befall me—look, Raymond!” taking a ring from his finger, “this is my signet. Nicholas, and the captains of my host, will obey the wearer: take it, save thy life as thou canst; and away from this rebellious Hold to my entrenchments upon the north bank of Tyne, where I would to God I had tarried till now, fishing for gudgeons! Command *thou*, where *I*

may command no more, and God prosper the first and last blow thou shalt strike for King William ! Tyrant though, in some sort, he be, he is *my* Sovereign and *thine* ; and who knows, for as smooth and fair-spoken as Stephen *now* is, whether *he* would not speedily love gold and power, fines and reliefs, fat benefices, rich wardships, and a thousand miles of royal forestry, as well and dearly as ever yet did his conquering Uncle, or his red Cousin ? Tush ! words are air ! Get thee hence, Raymond, I say, if thou can'st. I give my honour and my pennon to thy keeping, until an angel, or De Albemarle, give me wings to fly too.—If that be a vain hope, and I must needs rot within stone walls, commend me to my King, dear youth, and bid God speed him ; for Alberic du Coci ! He comes, indeed, with a power that shall drive these rebels to bitter straits ; but I say nought of *rescue* ; for if my head be yet upon my shoulders when this castle-convent is invested, it will off *then* at least, with the first summons of trumpet ! and so much, dear Raymond, for the last splinter of the broken lance !"—

He ceased ; and Raymond made no answer, except by a grasp of his hand, while his own shook with bitter emotion.

Hours wore away, evening drew on ; at last came a summons for Raymond to the presence of De Mowbray.

“ Remember !” said the Knight.

And then, as those part who know not if they shall meet again—they parted.

CHAPTER X.

“ —— O grace ! O heaven defend me !
Are ye a man ? have ye a soul or sense ?
God be with you ! take mine office. O wretched Fool !
That liv’st to make thine honesty a vice !
O monstrous world ! take note, take note, O world !
To be direct and honest is not safe !
I thank you for this profit ! —— ”

Othello.

RAYMOND was conducted to a scene not the least trying of many he had undergone.

In a small chamber adjoining the convent-refectory, sat the powerful Noble so often mentioned in these pages, although now first brought before the reader.

Robert de Mowbray was a man in the prime of life ; at least upon the youthful side of forty ; and, both in form and face, might be considered eminently handsome, by those who have no quarrel with an expression of stern grandeur. He exceeded in stature every man in his earl-

dom ; and his whole frame, proportionably stout, was in every part so knit and moulded for athletic and martial toil, that a single glance told the boldest adversary to beware of lightly opposing him. Excessive darkness of complexion rather added to than diminished the haughty majesty of his large and noble features. It certainly enhanced the terrors of their general expression, and, together with coal-black hair of profuse growth, gave lustre to those fires of ambitious thought so continually flashing in his eye from the proud spirit within.

He sat in the streaming sunlight, by the narrow lattice, cased in complete mail, excepting only helmet and gauntlets ; and neither rose nor gave one look or gesture of kindly greeting to the person once so favoured and trusted, and who had undergone so many toils and trials in his service.

Could Raymond's spirit have quailed, it had done so now, before the glance which was bent upon him. But an indignant consciousness that its stern scrutiny was, at once, ungrateful and unjust, armed him to meet and endure it.

"At last," said De Mowbray, in calm but freezing tones—"thou art here."

"At last," repeated the youth, with the firm-

ness of offended pride—"I am indeed here. Late, yet, methinks, too soon."

"A riddle!" said his Lord. "Expound. My ear is dull."

"Not to the voice of slander," rejoined the Squire. "To *that*, Northumberland can listen. Where is my accuser?"

The Earl replied, and, indeed, maintained the whole conversation, in the calm cold accents of "great greatness" which scorns to betray a strong emotion to an inferior.

"Why, who or what hath told thee thou art accused?"

"*Within*," said Raymond, touching his breast, "nothing. *Without*, all things; all acts—all eyes—all tones. Neglect, where I had once observance. Scorn, where I had once greeting. Slight, where I had once command. Restraint, where I had once authority.—These! and thine own stern glance and accent."

"Pity!" said the Earl, in chilling sarcasm. "Bitter and undeserved return for truth like thine!"

"By TRUTH ITSELF!" said Raymond, "bitter and undeserved alike!"

"Take heed," said De Mowbray, "be not doubly accursed! Day and night the vasty ears

of hell listen for *perjury*! Treason and murder yoke with it; and, to *their* punishment, *common* damnation is as repose and peace—aye! as sweet sleep, compared!—Had'st thou *a charge*, good youth, when last we parted?"

"I had. And had fulfilled it, but for mishap and treachery."

"Right. *Mishap* and *treachery* are the words. *They* drew thee to seek companionship with my worst foes—De Waleric and Du Coci."

"I sought it not," said Raymond, "nor knew Du Coci for your foe until to-day, within these walls. And for De Waleric—friend or foe to whomsoever else——"

—— "Peace! Thou hast said!" interrupted the Earl; "spare falsehood that avails not."

"Falsehood!"

"Be still. I knew De Waleric, and his hate. The grave that hath him give him peace! I know *thee*, and thy faithlessness, and will now make brief the commerce betwixt us."

"Faithlessness!" exclaimed Raymond, half choked with the iteration; "falsehood! faithlessness!"

"They were my words, Sir Squire," said De Mowbray; "we must be plain in this new world."

I know thee faithless. I know thee for a traitor, and, ere this, had given thee a traitor's doom, but for the memory of *the past*, chiefly of the fight at Alnwick, where I forget not whose arm was once my shield. For *that* I owe thee life, and will repay it. Go! thou art free. Life and dishonour be thy quittance! But, *so repaid*, be wise, fair Sir, be wise. Cross not my path again!"

"Can it be possible!" Raymond ejaculated; "Do I live and hear? O world! O man! O gratitude! False! False to *thee*! Traitor! Just heaven! If this be known, Truth and Loyalty shall sicken to do service save to God only! Show me, injurious Earl! *how* faithless? *wherein* traitor? Show me, upon what dim, faint shadow of evil seeming, thou, or the minion that hath lied to thee, the villain Paganel, could hang one poor suspicion of my truth?" :

"Brave orator!" said the Earl; "*thus* did'st thou vaunt and mouth, at Winchester, to Hugh-le-Loup; widening the breach of love thou should'st have toiled to heal! Thus, too, to the Damoiselle Matilda, when, upon bended knee, thou should'st have sued to her as for a thousand lives! But *not thus*, good Raymond, to the tyrant King, when thou wert graced with

secret sittings in his royal closet, to sell, for the fitting price, thy Lord—thy truth—thy faith—thy whole dishonoured self, body and soul! No! then—*then*, methinks, thou would'st be *calm*. Aye! and most *frank*, withal; they that bargain with a King keep not, for nice regards, the counsels of others—*they tell all*. But I had eyes in Winchester—other eyes than Torfin Paganel's—that tracked thee with the disguised King over his castle moat. Enough. I know thy traffic with him; and all the jugglery of the forest-tilting devised by him and thee. Go! I know thee. But thou art free and safe."

Surprise, sorrow, resentment, insulted integrity, the sense of hasty condemnation, of ill-requited attachment (for none had ever approached De Mowbray with the same personal warmth)—all these rushed upon Cœur d'Acier with such violence that each, in turn, seemed to neutralise its fellow. At last indignation became the master-feeling, and he made answer:

"It is enough. I am schooled! Thou hast taught me, great Earl, the wisdom of long toil for others—of faith—of self-devotion—of the thought by day and the dream by night for mortal man! *One* question and I depart, little

thanking thee for thy boon of life. The Lady Constance—doth *she*, too, hold me guilty?"

At these words, something flashed across the countenance of De Mowbray which no ordinary emotion ever gave it; and he replied with as much of passion as the guarded coldness of his nature allowed.

"Presumptuous fool! tempt me not by *that* name to resume my gift of mercy! Get hence; but mark! thou, who art become a lover of courts, shalt have a courtly dismissal! I will do thee grace for the last time."

He rang a small silver hand-bell, and, bidding those who attended conduct the youth to the great hall, disappeared himself by another door.

Raymond was ushered with mock form into the refectory or great eating-hall of the convent, now fitted up both for council and banqueting chamber, with as much of regal show and state as haste permitted. It seemed, at present, to be used for the latter purpose, and was thronged with persons in rich half-military habits; some sitting at the *dais* or chief table, elevated above the rest of the floor; and others at inferior boards. At the upper end of the former, under a purple canopy, upon a throne of a few steps,

sat Stephen of Albemarle. Two vacant seats were upon his right; beyond which sat the portly Hugh-le-Loup—"a Lord," as Chaucer says, "full fat, and in good point;" the gay and gallant Sir Ilbert de Tunbridge; the goodly person of Abbot Baldwin; and many dignitaries whose names have not descended to us. Upon the left, but close to the throne, Raymond saw with dazzled and confused eyes—and, oh! how changed since they last met! Constance de Mowbray!

Yes! she lived—the blast had been "tempered to the shorn lamb," and she sat in her father's halls, dragged to life and present safety from the waves of ocean and the stormier passions of man. The commands of Earl Robert had summoned her from her needful couch to the festal board; and she sat without a word or a motion—almost without one symptom of life, cold and pale as a statue fresh wrought.

Presently, De Mowbray entered, leading by the hand a Lady, veiled. They made an obeisance to the new Monarch, and then passed to the vacant seats upon his right, all present, except De Albemarle, rising and standing during the ceremonial.

"Welcome, our noble host!" said Stephen,

gaily, "we are here as guests untended; and thou art young in Chancellorship, or, having charge of a King's conscience, wouldst scantily leave him to the perils of the wine-cup, after escape from chambers where the brine of ocean was his best cheer."

"Pardon, my Liege," said the Earl—"they that be young in office make (as the proverb hath it)

‘Of a light toil
A heavy coil.’

I have been busied *with a King's emissary*; and could not choose but give him ear and answer."

"We do perceive;"—said De Albemarle, glancing with a jocular significancy at the veiled Lady, "an emissary of King Cupid! Heaven save and keep his gentle Majesty in *this* realm at least!"

"Say, rather," cried De Mowbray—filling and raising a goblet—"an emissary of King William—Heaven save and keep the realm of England from him and his! pledge me to *that*, my lords!"

He drank, and the daring toast was indeed pledged with an enthusiasm which marked at east the *unanimity* of the guests.

When the tumult subsided, De Mowbray raised the Lady and withdrew her veil. It is scarcely necessary to add that the features revealed were those of Matilda de Aquila, or that a buzzing murmur of admiration arose on every hand; for, besides the sure homage to the chosen of the great, there was, no doubt, a genuine tribute to her beauty, which never appeared more splendid than now, even in the presence of one who generally threw all competition into shadow. But, of *three* persons present, it might be difficult to say to whom the surprise was most perfect and painful.—To the love-sick Sir Ilbert de Tunbridge, who in a moment saw the issue of *his* passion and suit—to Raymond, heart-stung by the calumnies he doubted not *she* had contributed to forge or foster—or to Constance, who remembering the veiled lady of Nunna Mynstre, saw in her re-appearance under *such* auspices a long perspective of fresh trials.

“My Liege and Peers!” resumed De Mowbray, “there is amongst us a minion of that Red Tyrant who swore of late to give *this* hand” (raising Matilda’s) “to whomsoever of his meanest slaves should strike off the head of Robert de Mowbray.” My Lord of Chester, (turning to Hugh-le-Loup) “was it not thus sworn?”

"By our Lady of Bangor, yes!" answered the Marchman.

"Then, noble Hugo," resumed the Northern Earl, "Guardian of Matilda de Aquila, say! hast thou freely and truly given her to *my* hand, with sole proviso of the Royal sanction?"

"I have."

"My gracious Liege! hast thou, as Guardian-Paramount of England, freely and truly given to *my* hand the Damoiselle Matilda de Aquila, daughter of the dead Richerius de Aquila, niece of Hugh Lupus, Earl of Chester—with sole proviso of my truth and fealty?"

"I have."

"Lady! hast thou freely and truly given heart and hand to Robert de Mowbray?"

"I have."

"Prior of Tynemouth! holy servant of God, St. Mary, St. Oswyn, and St. Alban! hast thou, by solemn rites of Mother Church, given for ever to *my* hand the hand of Matilda de Aquila?"

"I have!" replied the deep voice of the Prior; and by this strange form De Mowbray gave the first appraisal of his marriage, which had, in fact, been privately celebrated two days before.

Then, striding to where Raymond stood with burning cheek, he said, smiling in bitter triumph,

"*Thus much* thou hast in embassy from *me!*—who else"—he added, "would now send greeting to the Tyrant, under favour of my Liege, may speak. *My say is said.*"

"And, by St. George! *well said!*" exclaimed De Albemarle. "Look, noble Peers! I crown this goblet, and crave to be pledged right joyously by all, to the dear health of the Bride, our lovely Hostess, Matilda, erst of Aquila, now Countess of Northumberland!"

A hundred goblets were drained—an acclaiming shout went through the hall, and De Mowbray, bowing with proud humility, returned his thanks to the Sovereign.

"I thank *thee*, noble Earl!" returned the latter, when silence was restored, "for teaching me this form of embassy! mark how I profit by it."

He turned to Constance. She seemed neither to observe the action, nor to hear his words.—He raised her hand—it lay in his, cold, unresisting, unreplying. He looked in her bloodless face, and would have desisted, had a graceful retreat been possible. But it was too late.

"Another oath," he said aloud, "our tyrant cousin of Winchester hath sworn, if report speak sooth. He hath sworn to give *this* hand, the

hand of Constance de Mowbray, to whomsoever of his minions shall win back for him the New Castle upon Tyne, now held and garrisoned for us. Earl of Northumberland, is it not so rumoured?"

"They that *heard*, my liege," said De Mowbray, "attest it."

"Then, noble Robert, Sire and Guardian of this lovely one, dost thou (to use thine own form and phrase) freely and truly give her to ME, Stephen, erst of Albemarle, thy Friend and Prince, with sole proviso that she be crowned Queen of England when victory hath once given us free pathway to the throne?"

"With full, and joyous, and most loyal heart!" was the reply.

The regal suitor then turned once more to the Lady—but dared not carry further what he had begun! He saw that her eye had at length fallen upon Raymond, and that it glanced from him she loved to him whom she *did not*, with a fire resembling insanity. He saw that even the dreaded frown of De Mowbray availed nothing against the speaking gaze of Cœur d'Acier, and that, regardless of all things else, she continued to meet *that* gaze

"With look of answering sympathy and love."

It cost him a fearful effort to become "a most princely hypocrite," and *smile* away his embarrassment. But pride and necessity prevailed. He motioned her to withdraw—turned to the assemblage, and said *smilingly*,

"A maiden's whispered 'Yes' is for the chosen ear. Away, Sir Envoy! if such thou art; report to William the Red what thou hast witnessed, and bid him look that his crown be fast, or ere the world be many days older, we will rend it from his temples!"

"Tell him," said the Earl of Chester, "that Hugh-le-Loup 'with his gross body' will keep well his parting word—he will '*meet him with all his power*.'"

"Tell him," said the now doubly disgusted Knight of the Falcon, (not sorry to convey his *cause* of disgust to those around, whom he felt had equally deceived him,) "that Ilbert de Tunbridge, with a thousand lances, will thank him ere long for the promised *Bride* he wots of."

"Tell him," said the martial Abbot Baldwin, "that, with our Lady's grace, Baldwin of Tyne-mouth will teach him anon to do scorn to Mother Church, by simony; and grasping of vacant benefices; and by compelling of holy men to thrust their mortified bodies into unholy mail, to

strike with the carnal weapon instead of the axe canonical. Tell him that our once silent cloisters are now as courts of guard; and our once solemn towers as the high places of a fenced city! That I have changed my dalmatique for a hauberk, and my crozier for a lance; and that I and my monks will gird up our loins and do battle against him lustily, although we perish as the twelve hundred Saints of Bangor by the hands of the Heathen Ethelfred; or as those whom the blessed Alwyn led to the gory field of Hastings. Tell him, if thou wilt, that 'a sword is sharpened, and furbished, and given into the hand of the slayer.'—That 'Hell is naked before him and hath no covering!'"

So ran the bravado of the military Monk, and it was applauded to the very echo by his warlike hearers.

"Now, get thee hence," said De Mowbray. "Fly to thy new lord with a swift wing, lest his own be stricken before thou join'st him! and deep and far may he trust thee, that thou may'st as far and deeply betray him! For the beloved Alberic du Coci, tell *thy* Master, and *his*, that when ye have marched within the range of our catapults, I will fling the marauding villain's head into the midmost of your camp. Ho!

tend this gallant forth ! give him safe conduct to the barriers, but let him speak with none. Away, *Traitor !*"

The spirit of Raymond had, by this, broken through the last lingering ties of early feeling, which, up to this point, restrained him. The last drop had fallen into the brimmed cup, and his whole outraged heart boiled over at last in passionate speech.

" Yes !" he exclaimed, in tones which rang through the wide hall—placing himself at the same time so as to confront the whole gazing and listening throng—

" Yes ! I go ! I leave thy convent-castle, proud ingrate ! *Castle*, where there is no truth in man—*Convent*, where there is no honour to God ! I leave it as I would leave a house of pest—I fly from it as honesty and faith fly from the robber's den—the rebel's haunt ! Deal with Alberic du Coci as thou canst, or *darest !* He would despise me did I make prayer for him.—I have served thee, haughty Earl ! as never before did young or old ! I have made my bosom thy shield ; I have shut thy counsel in it as in a chest trebly barred—and *THIS* is my requital ! But my last words shall be those of the Primate Anselm, when in *my* ear he denounced thee for

dishonour done to this very house ! ‘ Tell De Mowbray of Northumberland, that even under the holy roof he hath defiled shall the finger of chastisement be upon him !’ — Now, helpless, ruined, scorned, and solitary, I depart, but— Beware of my return !”

Thus saying, he turned, like the faithful Abdiel—

“ Among the faithless faithful only he !”

And, in his excessive beauty of person, his fervour of just resentment, and solitary defiance of numbers, Raymond looked no unworthy impersonation of the great Poet’s youthful Seraph abandoning the rebel-spirits. Of all who were thus defied, not one attempted either to answer or restrain him, and with this impunity,

“ ——— from midst them forth he pass’d
Long way through hostile scorn ; which he sustained
Superior, nor of violence feared aught ;
And, with retorted scorn, his back he turned
On those proud towers !———”

CHAPTER XI.

"Away now with the scabbard ! War's let loose—
 My stirrup shall give law ! Revenge !
 Full, swift, and bloody !———"

Croly's Catiline.

"——— To the ramparts all !
 Quick ! load the engines ! let the archers shoot !
 Whirl slings—rain lances—give them steel i' the teeth !
 Fight all, as if upon his single arm
 Each bore the whole high fortunes of the night !"

Ibid.

For the present, we leave the incensed Raymond in full flight to wheresoever his now broken fortunes seemed to call him, and remain with the revellers of Tynemouth.

They spent a graver interval in council, and upon the battlements; and there the valiant Prior, (full of the defiance he had hurled against the King,) lectured, alternately, upon fortification and church government; upon the atrocity of vacant benefices, and the beauty of a mangonel which would throw its shot a thousand yards. He proved, also, as they passed along the walls

and towers, how ill-fitted was the situation of Tynemouth for the devotions of Godly men ; the Abbey being, as he classically expressed himself, “ *nimis religiosus, horridus et incultus,*” perched upon a hideous precipice, nodding over a tumultuous shore. He owned, indeed, that the terrors of the rocky coast, and, in especial, those that lay, in grim watch for mariners, around the mouth of the river, might, occasionally, in storms and heavy gales, promote pious thoughts and holy purposes of dedicating candles and candlesticks to St. Oswyn ; but that, in reality, few—very few of these irrevocable vows were ever performed, seeing that (even in those days) sailors were the same jolly and light-hearted reprobates they have almost always turned out ; and rarely fulfilled the good promises of their worst hours of danger, because (in accordance with a joke of latter times) they *could not*, if they were drowned, and *would not*, if they were saved.

He then shifted his position, and with something of worldly vain glory, pointed out the extent of the Abbey walls, the beauty of their elaborately adorned Church, and the solemn grandeur of all their offices ; not forgetting to enumerate the villas, and the lands, and the tithes ; the

impropriations, the advowsons, the messuages, the fairs, the markets, and heaven knows what other god-sends of temporalities, which had, all and sundry, been confirmed by royal charter to "his *poor* house."

But the happiest and most fertile theme of his eloquence, was the admirable situation of Tyne-mouth for the purposes of castellated defence.

"Ah! benedicite, my children!" he exclaimed, "if our fathers or forefathers had built them here, and upon such other beetling bases, goodly castles, with towers, and battlements, and munition, and needful engines, like to these around us; rather than holy churches, in which, oftentimes, they that chaunt the anthem may halloo until their windpipes crack, ere one screamer heareth the voice of another, for the loud bellowing of wind and wave, like unto a thousand bulls of Bashan, along this monstrous shore; I say, my brethren, (my children I would say) had they been wise to build them *stout castles*, then, never had the blood-thirsty heathen, the pagan Dane, sailed in fierce triumph up Tyne and Wear; and, again, when they had burnt, and slain, and plundered, betaken them to sea, booty-laden, as pert and blythsome as though they had done a courtesy and a grace

to the land, and were departing with God's benison and the King's!—I promise ye, my Masters!" (he added, forgetting his canonical epithets as he waxed warmer), "with but a brace or two of Catapults, and a Trebuchet, I would have so mauled and peppered the Giant Harfager's five hundred barks of Norway, when he sailed between these headlands in the days of Saxon Harold, that, by St. Herebald! the Pagan Dog should have thought the very rocks themselves were flung upon his knaves' pates! Oh! commend me to huge stones* that crush the iron-pot of the valiant into the brain-pan, and the mailed limbs of the proud into gory mammocks!"

And, in the rapture of his panegyric, he

* We really do not know whether the worthy Abbot was a votary of the Muses as well as of Mars and St. Benedict, but the least hint of such an addiction would have induced us to ascribe to him (notwithstanding a difference of two or three centuries in *date*), that curious old poem in which such a sounding stave is lifted up to the praise and glory of *great stones* in warfare; for example—

"Use eke the cast of *stone* wyth slynge or honde,
It falleth ofte, yf other shotte ther none is,
Men harneysed in steel may not wythstonde
The multitude and myghty caste of stonès!
And stonès, in effect, are every where—

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flourished the iron *wince* of a Balista with an air of great gusto, and looked as though it would have delighted his heart to hurl a ton or two of ragged limestone into the first unhappy boat that, as the phrase went, "came within his danger," only just by way of practical illustration !

De Albemarle, who stood near, but apart, upon an angle of the seaward parapet, listened with amused complacency to the soldier-priest. To him it was " a feeling disquisition." He exulted in the security of a fortress which commanded so fine a river at the entrance, while the only bridge for some miles along its course was, in like manner, " over-crowded" by Newcastle, or, as we have hitherto more distinctively termed it, "*the* New Castle ;" a strength manned also by his adherents.

In spite of the chill thrown over him by the coldness, if not aversion, of Constance, his " bosom's lord " began to " sit lightly on his throne ;" and he looked around him with that ambitious swelling of the heart proper to one who trusts soon to call the whole round of earth and ocean that he surveys, his own. The sun was more than half down ; the beach below already half in twilight, and the long shadows of the cliff and convent swept far over the waves.

But, upon the dancing waters beyond, and the embattled walls above, the lingering radiance streamed with a contrasted glory, that, to a poet, or a moralist, might well have suggested the trite image of scarcely-separated human joy and sorrow—the sun-light and the shadow of mortal life. De Albemarle felt it thus, and, looking where the billows broke upon Marston Headland, thought of the dark caverns in which those seeming playful waters had, but a few hours before, threatened to silence him and his ambitious hopes for ever! *Now*, the rich evening light, and the pure breath of its summer heaven, were upon him; ocean, and vast walls, and a gallant army, girdled him in; and the repast which awaited him in Tynemouth might be the speedy precursor of a banquet in the palace halls of Winchester or London!

While these flattering dreams prevailed, a few tones of a harp awoke near him, and, advancing in their direction, he saw that a minstrel had placed himself where the ears of the new monarch might listen to his strain. It was rude and wild, but as the transition even to *dull* rhyme may afford *some* relief to the reader, we venture to transcribe the “Lay” sung by the minstrel on Tynemouth battlements.

THE DEMON'S ISLE.

1.

O blythely, blythely sped the bark
That Saxon Eadmer bore,
With his fair-hair'd bride, in her beauty's pride,
From Bamborough's kingly shore !
But the storm-fiend came in cloud and flame,
And the surges whelmed them o'er !
And a Demon fired a beacon red
O'er his isle of terror glaring,
Whose shore was spread with stranded dead
For the famish'd sea-birds' tearing !

2.

Slowly, slowly the pale dawn crept
From the dark embrace of night ;
The storm was hushed and the wild winds slept,
Save a murmuring breeze that lightly swept
A raft o'er the surges white.
Sir Eadmer there, with his Lady fair,
For weary life were striving ;
And the burdened mast on the current fast
To the Demon's Isle was driving !

3.

Sadly, sadly, o'er paths unblessed,
They passed with foot-steps sore ;
O'er tangled wilds that ne'er were pressed
By mortal foot before.
The wild-dog howled, and the she-wolf growled,
The wanderers' hearts dismaying,
And the serpent rolled his scaly fold
Where their lonely feet were straying !

4.

Deadly, deadly nightshade arched
The path of the hapless pair,
And thirst and hunger gnawed and parched,
But fount nor food was there !
Alone the fruit of that poisonous root
In the dim drear woods was growing,
And many a snake hissed loud in the brake
Where the lonely stream was flowing !

5.

Darkly, darkly fell the shade
Of night on the Demon's Isle,
His lady's couch Sir Eadmer made
Where a withering fir o'erhung the glade,
And he vow'd with sleepless eye and blade
To watch around the while.
" I'll hurl the wolf in yon craggy gulf,
If near thy slumbers prowling,
And the serpent shall start and glide apart,
To hear the savage howling !"

6.

Fatally, fatally Eadmer drank
Of the deadly dew as it fell ;
Till in slumbers deep his eye-lids sank,
O'er-power'd with a magic spell !
At the raven's croak, with a start he woke,
His flesh with terror creeping—
And he softly stept where his lady had slept—
But he found no lady sleeping !

7.

Wildly, wildly, o'er rock and steep,
Then hurried the phrenzied knight,
With many a curse on his treacherous sleep,
And many a curse, more dread and deep,
On the treacherous elfin-sprite !

Up started then from his gloomy den
 The fiend in his anger proudly—
 “I care not for ban of a perjured man!”
 He cried to Sir Eadmer loudly!—

8.

Boldly, boldly Sir Eadmer's brow
 He crossed, then hallowed his blade—
 Cried “Holy Virgin! O, help me now!”
 And cleft down the elfin-shade!—
 With an eldritch scream, like a fading dream,
 The grisly shape departed;
 And his lady dear, from the cavern drear,
 To his eager bosom started!

9.

Gaily, gaily carols the lark
 At the smile of the rising morn,
 And gaily, gaily speeds a bark,
 O'er the ocean surges borne!
 Sir Eadmer there, and his Lady fair
 A boundless joy's pervading,
 And the Demon's Isle from their ken the while
 Far, far o'er the billow is fading!

De Albemarle drew nearer to the Minstrel.
 “Art thou a Saxon?” he said.
 “I was, my Liege,” said the Man of Song.
 “Thou *wast*? why, what art now?”
 “Nothing. But I would fain be anything
 that best pleases your Grace.”
 “Thou art a courtier already,” said De Albe-
 marle.—“Dost know the Saxon Wolfsic?”

"*The pale?*"

"Pale or black—Wolfsic *the devil*, I mean !
Dost wot of such?"

"I have seen and heard of him, my Liege ;
and can both say and sing somewhat of Se-
Blaca : — but it were ill-fitting your Norman
——I would say your *royal* ear."

"Make me mine own judge of that," replied
Stephen, "and *say* not ; but give me *song* ;
for, if the *matter* be ungracious, 'tis doubly so
lacking both time and tune."

"Aye, but—my Liege——"

"Thy song, varlet ! and bandy not *but* or *if*
with me ! if it be a song of *Satan* thou shalt
have both pardon and largesse !"

BALLAD.

WOLFSIC THE PALE.

1.

Lo ! Wolfsic Se-Blaca comes down in the vale,
With the foam on his steed, and the rust on his mail ;
He rides not with buckler—he rides not with lance,
But his heart is as strong, and as piercing his glance !
And hauberk and helm may as stoutly avail
'Gainst the arrows of Death as of Wolfsic the Pale !

2.

Wolfsic the Pale has no page at his call,
For his slumbers no couch, for his courser no stall

He rushes afar with no store for his lack,
 No purse at his saddle, no squire at his back !
 Yet the boldest and proudest in surcoat and mail
 May fly from the bow-craft of Wolfsic the Pale !

3.

Though the trumpet of war hath forgotten to speak,
 There are spots on his blade, there are scars on his cheek,
 There are shrieks in the valley, and groans on the hill,
 And curses on Wolfsic are echoing still !
 Yet the fieriest gallant may tremble and quail
 'Ere he ride to avenge them on Wolfsic the Pale !

4.

The Lord of high Ratcheough his vengeance averred,
 And forty bold vessels rode forth at his word ;
 But the sharp spur of Wolfsic was dashed in his steed,
 Like lightning his eye, and like lightning his speed !
 The deep foss to swim, and the high walls to scale,
 And the Norman to slay, was for Wolfsic the Pale !

5.

There's a Chief of the proud ones laid low in his blood,
 There are smouldering heaps where his proud turrets stood ;
 And the maid and the matron may sorrow in vain,
 For the dreadless AVENGER hath swept o'er the plain,
 And the might of the Norman shall never avail
 'Gainst the bow and the shaft of stern Wolfsic the Pale !

" I thank thee. Take thy largesse," said De
 Albemarle, " and, when I have *hanged* this
 boasted Se-Blaca, thou shalt sing me a lay
 thereon, at the gallow's foot. Go."

Soon after, the Banqueting Chamber was
 VOL. III. K

again filled. The re-re-supper was splendidly served. The wine cup again mantled; and the spirits of the revolutionists rose rapidly to their highest pitch. Every one declaimed furiously against the tyranny of William and his Minister; recapitulated broken oaths and promises; and cited acts of oppression, and statutes that ground all ranks from the baron to the serf. All were furiously patriotic. All regarded themselves as dreadfully injured, and seemed determined to be as dreadfully revenged. All were angry, fluent, sanguine, resolute; and fully convinced, although they knew not how, that the law of primogeniture was absurd, and the Conqueror's *nephew* quite as eligible to the throne as his *son*. The enthusiasm of their loyalty to De Albemarle was in exact ratio to their abhorrence of Rufus. He was "the rascalliest sweet young prince!" in every one's estimation who had his clutch upon a goblet of rich wine; and, even at the lowest boards, where double ale was the preferred beverage, oaths and protestations flaggon-wide and black-jack deep, were as plentiful as flowers in spring. Upon the part of the new Monarch all was in the usual magniloquent, promissory vein. The grinding tyranny of the forest statutes—the exaction of *moneyage* and

fines, the grievances of *wardships* and *reliefs*; the retention or simoniacal disposal of benefices; in fact *all* political sores and maladies were to be healed for ever in the restored body-politic of the Commonwealth. Even the wretched English were at length to pick up the dropped crumbs from their Master's table, without being spurned from under it like dogs; and the golden age of government was to be restored in England under a Monarch of the people's own choice, who, like Shakspeare's "King Gonzalvo" should cause "all foizon and abundance without sweat or endeavour—abolish poverty and occupation, treason and felony, and make all his 'innocent subjects' equally happy and pure." So, at least, by interpretation *sub-vino*, ran the convivial manifesto of King Stephen; and, in the sanguine spirit it generated or fostered, cities were taken and victories achieved, with more and more admirable facility at the brimming of every fresh goblet.

"My liege!" said a young Knight, starting from his seat, "what good at your royal hand shall *he* have who first brings news of the Tyrant's march?"

"Bonnet of Squirehood, if a Yeoman," said Stephen; "Spur and Baldric, if a Squire—and

if a Knight, I will cut square his pennon.* God grant it be claimed speedily !”

“ Methinks,” said the Earl of Northumberland, “ Reginald de Lacy hath taken *that* quest; for here he tarried not after a single goblet, but leapt to saddle and away; malgre his drenched gambeson and hose. Armour, if I beheld aright, he had none.”

“ The poor fish,” said De Albemarle, “ could not swim for his shell, in yonder coral grots. But I warrant him sped to the New Castle, where there is no lack of dark-eyed dainty ones for consolation.”

This was the first of many jests upon the absent Lord of Newark, and little did the jesters dream how wide of the mark were all their facetious guesses as to his sudden absence. But, at length, came sober certainty; for, at a late hour, when the tide of mirth was at flood, and all had risen to retire in high heart and hope, Reginald de Lacy burst suddenly into the midst, faint, staggering, almost breathless, and with looks

* Gentle reader ! “ Ken ye ought o’ Captain Grose ? ” if so, you may not require to be told that “ on the performance of any gallant action, the Knight’s *Pennon* was converted into a *Banner*, by the King or General, by cutting off the point. This raised the *Knight* to a *Bannerett*.”

Military Antiquities.

harmonizing as ill with all around as those of a mourner at a bridal-feast.

De Mowbray and De Albemarle, each grasping an arm, almost forced him into a seat, and both in one voice exclaimed—

“Thy news!”

“Evil!” he said, in a low tone, but with deadly emphasis—“Dismiss these brawlers.”

De Mowbray gave a courteous signal of dispersion, and presently none remained but the chief actors.

“Now,” he said, “thy evil news.”

“The New Castle is stormed and taken.” replied the Baron.

“God for his mercy!” said De Albemarle—
“by whom?”

“Raymond of the Heart of Steel!” answered Reginald. “So much for *sparing life*! *He* hath spared little, I promise ye! Two hundred men lie dead ’twixt keep and barbican!—Now, by the Mother of Heaven! siege and battle many a one have I seen, and laughed at the shedding of blood since my years were twice seven; but, as I live and breathe, I did never yet see mortal man fight like yonder incarnate Devil! Oh, the curse of being out-wearied and well-nigh drowned ere a fray begin! Twice

did we cross swords, and twice had I good help from my stout merry-men, or, by St. George, ere this I had been with those who tell no tales !”

“ Thine is a *strange* tale,” said Hugh-le-Loup — “ Why, where hath *he* a power to storm a castle ?”

“ I cannot tell,” said De Lacy ; “ I speak but what I have seen—(Give me a bowl of wine, I pray you !) Some say it was Du Coci’s strength, others, the van of the Tyrant’s army. But they had crossed the moat on hurdles ; and there was a postern opened—treachery belike ; I know not what, or how. One had arrived who swore to a great battle ;—King William slain, and Stephen crowned ; and there was nought but tossing of caps, and drinking of double healths. Alas ! poor gulls ! Watch and ward, when I arrived, were forgotten things ! they had drowned them in jack and flaggon !”

De Albemarle struggled hard with chagrin and rage.

“ *Thou*, Reginald de Lacy,” he said, “ art a brave man, and would’st bear thee full knightly, I doubt not. But for our Castellan De Morley—— !”

“ *Threaten*, my Liege,” said the Baron, “ that

he may live long.* 'Twill hardly be, else—*very* hardly, if ye retake him not before the power of the King be up. Meanwhile, he is safe from *your* vengeance, he and his whole garrison—but the Lord keep him from that of Rufus!”

De Mowbray's countenance was dreadful. No man ever saw him violent in action, or gesture, or heard a burst of passion from his lip,

“ *Within*, within, 'twas *there* the spirit worked.”

But his brow became almost *literally* black, as he asked the brief question,

“ Saw ye Torfin Paganel?”

“ I did,” answered De Lacy, “ and so wilt thou never again!—*his* bolt is sped! *he* will never more carve to fair Lady, nor rivet a harness-clasp! I saw him fly from the avenging Raymond, as the hare flies from the hound! from stair to stair—from chamber to chamber—from turret to turret was the race; at last, upon the platform of the Keep—and *there*, from whence flight was none, save to Heaven above, or Hell beneath, *there* did the quarry turn to bay; and there they fought, and closed, and grappled, and tugged, as ye have seen two mastiffs! In brief, as your Grace's cousin, Henry

* Allusion to a Northern proverb.

of Aquitain, dealt with the rebel Conan in Roan, so dealt the fiery Raymond with Torfin. He hurled him sheer over the battlements, and dashed his wretched body to shapelessness upon the stones beneath! So much for Torfin Paganel!"——

"And so much," cried De Albemarle, "for our trust in the New Castle! What then? must we look pale for that? and creep to bed, like stricken boys, crest-fallen?"

"Not for the taking of a hundred towers!" cried De Mowbray — "We must amend the evil. Come! be of cheer—'tis but a vexing scratch, no killing maim. We are of strength to meet the tyrant in the field. This night, sleep they who will or can—*my* couch shall be my saddle."

"And mine!" said Stephen. "I light a clearer, steadier torch of Hope at thy brave spirit. It is well, too, by St. Mary, that the noble Reginald hath escaped."

"Marry, for mine own part," said the Baron, "I had the grace to cut my way forth; but if I can tell ye *how*, or through what gate or postern, strangle me! There was nought for it but cleaving down, and thrusting through."

"Look!" said Earl Robert, "I will have

Alberic Du Coci led beneath the walls; and threaten to wash his eyes with molten lead, and, after, tear his heart out, if they redeem him not by surrender, and that speedily!—Didst thou break forth alone, De Lacy?"

"Mary-mother, no!" said the Baron. "I had help and comradeship from a remnant of my own varlets—would they had been more to resist, or fewer to yield! for I can tell ye the fairer half are in limbo."

"*That* craves but little dole," said De Almarle. "A poor handful, albeit of stout knaves—but, at the worst, what hope to take again by storm what storm hath taken?"

"First and chiefly," said Earl Mowbray,—
"What of our prime foe? What of the red-haired Tyrant?"

"This," said De Lacy—"from a jaded courier, who passed us hurrying northward upon the bloody spur, Rufus is at the gates of Durham, full twenty thousand strong."

"Strong let him be," said De Mowbray, "and stronger by five thousand more! we may upon him with good heart. *Our* battle will shew heavier muster, if De Vesco make but timely head at Alnwick."

"Aye! but ye know not that," said the Earl

of Chester; "and ye know not if the King's twenty thousand include Montgomery with his western host."

"Grant that it doth not,—we will fight ere they can join; and, if God give us victory, I warrant Montgomery from striking stroke afterwards! I know not the hearts of others; but, for mine own part, *battle* for me, to-morrow!"

"St. George for us and England!" cried Stephen,—“that wish is mine. My heart is in mail and stirrup even now!”

"And, verily," said Prior Baldwin, "*my* soul also scenteth the battle afar off! It is eager to cry 'ha! ha! to the trumpets—to the thunder of the captains and the shouting!'"

"Aye, but fight not with broken staves;" said Hugh-le-Loup. "De Vesco's power is a main limb of our preparation, and we shall make lame march upon King Rufus if it be lacking."

"Credit me, noble Lupus," said De Mowbray, "it is not so. Better De Vesco absent and Rufus fought, ere he draw levies from Newcastle, than wait for strength from Alnwick until the Tyrant have taken Durham, and, it may be, crossed both Tyne and Wear, commanding, as he then will, the bridges of both streams."

“Right, past a doubt!” said De Lacy—“In God’s name, say that we will fight to-morrow, and there an end; for, methinks, if we debate long, and I sleep not away this aching of my toiled bones, a lad of twelve shall hurl me from the saddle with a sheep crook.”

“Sleep and be strong, good Reginald!” said De Mowbray—“I will have heed that thou art roused by second cock-crow. Ho, there! a chamberlain!”

“Nay,” said the Baron, with rather abated cheer, “Hubert and De Belchamp, my stout squires, shall watch in my chamber. It is a foolish wont of mine in strange beds—*I have ill dreams*, and arise, sleeping, and walk in them. Good night, my Liege and Lords!”

“Good night, and happy dreams of to-morrow!” was the reply.

“To-morrow be it,” said the Earl of Chester; adding, however, “but it will *not* be. Credit me, Earl of Northumberland, thou can’st not draw to head in so brief time.”

“Why, then, the next day,” said Northumberland, “and ’tis, indeed, somewhat of the briefest; for we must needs draw levies from the castles northward. Meanwhile, choose ye, my Liege, Tynemouth or Bamborough? for

thither, in thy charge or mine, Constance and Matilda must away at early dawn, since neither may *we* follow Rufus northward, nor *he* us,—leaving them in the rear. Say, then, wilt thou to Bamborough, or tarry here in Tynemouth?

“In Tynemouth, I!” said the Earl, “lest it be said the new King loves not to face the old. And thou, too, noble Robert, knowest best what troops to pick for the field and what to leave for castle-guard.”

Thus saying and agreeing, they parted for the night. Scouts and couriers were then dispatched. The warders were doubled on the battlements; and while the other heads of the rebellion slept, or strove to sleep, De Mowbray and the Prior walked the rounds from barrier to barrier, arranging, in the little interval thus allowed, their final plan of defence and co-operation.

“And need is there,” said the warlike Churchman, “that we watch the way, and keep the munition, and make the sword sharp and the spear ready; for he that dasheth in pieces will come up, and will make a fort, and cast a mount, and lift up the buckler, and set engines of war against us; and with all his axes shall he strive to break down our gates. Now, by

the jaw-bone of Samson and the ox-goad of Shamgar the son of Anath! I would that I, even I, unworthy as I am, might deal with this fat tyrant of England as Ehud the son of Gera dealt with Eglon the fat king of the Moabites, when he slew him with a dagger of a cubit long and having two edges! Verily, I would run upon him as a giant, and defile his horn in the dust!"

CHAPTER XII.

They went on board, the wind with speed
Blew them along the deep ;
At length they spied a huge square tower
On a rock full high and steep.
The sea was smooth, the sky was blue ;
As they approached nigher,
King Ida's castle they well knew,
And the banks of Bamboroughshire.

The " Laidley Worm of Spindleston Heugh."

ALL night long the sound of defensive preparations were heard in the courts, and along the vast walls of Tynemouth ; and, with the first paly light of dawn, the warder upon the highest turret sent his keen glance on every side, over land and sea, to mark the approach of either friend or foe. But all was quiet and peaceful ; the lifeless quiet of sterility—the sullen peace of desolation—of abandoned homes and forgotten tillage. So dreadful in every part of Northumberland had been the ravages of the first William, when, with fire and sword, he avenged

himself for the rebellious spirit of its inhabitants! Nearly a hundred thousand of these unhappy beings perished, as well by famine as the sword, after feeding upon the horses abandoned by the Normans, and even upon human flesh. "It was a fearful spectacle," says an old annalist, "to see upon the roads and public ways, and at the doors of the houses, human bodies left a prey to the worms; *for there was no one left to throw a little earth upon them!*" The whole extended tract between the Tyne and the Ouse, a district of sixty miles, once full of towns and cultivated fields, was now silent and barren, the refuge only of wild beasts and robbers. Such were the tender mercies of the Normans.

The warder of Tynemouth saw nothing beyond his own walls that indicated life, except a distant sail or two hanging between sea and sky; a few boats upon the Tyne, just discernible through the blue haze that tracked its windings, and a little smoke over the wretched fishing village of Shields, and in the direction of "the New Castle," and of the sister monasteries of Jarrow and Weremouth. Not then was "the black banner of science" flung abroad to every point of the heavens; the eye rested upon no masses of huge enginry, uttering at measured

intervals their volcanic belchings. No trains of sable carriages shot along their metallic paths with the level directness and almost with the speed of arrows. The earth was not ransacked for hundreds of subterranean miles by the busy hand of mining speculation, and her bituminous treasures, destined to form the wealth of future thousands, to raise large towns, and freight innumerable fleets, slept undisturbed, if not unknown,* in their pitchy depths.

At an early hour, according to a resolution of the previous night, De Mowbray embarked his lovely Countess and more lovely daughter for Bamborough. They left the monastery with little attendance, and by a secret postern, that nothing bearing the appearance of flight might be suggested to the garrison; while a vessel lay ready in Prior's Haven to receive them. Passing down to the beach, Matilda was conducted by her Lord; Constance, by one in knightly attire, but so masked and muffled as to defy recognition. He lost no moment, however, in addressing her.

"I have greetings for the Lady Constance," he said, "from one who knows not, in this

* Not unknown certainly. Even the Romans had worked coal by the Tyne.

stormy day, if he may ever more pay greeting to one so dear."

How ready is the heart to be deceived, as well as to deceive! The image of Raymond flashing upon her at the instant, she turned to the speaker with such a gesture of listening eagerness, as, perhaps, betrayed to him her misconstruction, for he added abruptly, and in undisguised accents—

"*The King*, Lady, commends him to thee."

"*My King*," she said, with the recovered coldness of disappointment, "sends *no* greeting to the Daughter of Northumberland; and, tell the Earl of Albemarle, if thou art Knight of his, that he is yet no Sovereign to Constance de Mowbray."

"Heartless girl!" exclaimed Stephen, "I have loved thee with a passion to which all others—even ambition itself, are but as leaves and straws to the whirl-blast! to which all objects else are but as clay to diamonds! I have nursed this dream of Kingship chiefly for thee, to fix a crown upon thy brow—to see thee great and feared, as thou art loved and lovely! At this price did thy father's ambition set thee, and for this have I staked life and fame, and toiled to the dizzy peak from whence there is no

descent, save falling headlong. Yet but a few hours, and the host of the tyrant Rufus will be upon us, and thou—thou wilt pray for its success—for victory to him whose conquering step must be upon thy father's neck and mine ! Mine, who would have bought thy love with the sovereignty of the whole earth ?”

“ No !” replied the Lady, “ my knee shall not bend—my hand shall not rise—my heart shall vent no wish, in orisons for victory to either host ! To HIM who is the God of Battles and of Empire, I leave the issue ! If ruin and defeat await thee, Stephen of Albemarle, I will give thee a sister's tears for her defeated brother ; for I have seen, or fancied, in thee, flashes of nobleness and generous thought. If thou returnest a conqueror, remember my last words in Se-Blaca's cavern—words which thou shouldst take shame to wring again from my burning lip—*I love another.*”

“ Let him beware of me !” said the exasperated Earl. “ I guess at whom thou pointest—I guess the degraded minion whom *thou*, obdurate and perverse, shouldst take shame to weigh but in one moment's thought with Stephen of Albemarle ! Victor or vanquished—king or captive ! I will repay him ! I will mete him full measure

with heaped hand—his scorns to me—his treachery to thy father—his purchased crouching to the tyrant ! Know, Lady, that, for all this, De Mowbray, but yestereven, spurned him as a caitiff from his castle-hall ! and, for all this, let him but cross me in the coming battle, and I will spurn with my mailed foot upon this boasted ‘Heart of Steel !’ ”

The heart of Constance became like the high Roman’s, “too great for what contained it !”

“O, braggart !” she exclaimed, “traducing, slanderous braggart ! for, were they my last earthly words, and wert thou upon England’s throne to listen, so would I call thee ! Raymond do scorn to thee or thine ? He is all gentleness and courtesy ! Raymond *treacherous* ? He is the very soul of truth and honour ! Crouch for hire to tyranny ? I tell thee, Lord of Albemarle ! *thou*, nor *Rufus*, could *so* hire him, with an empire trebling that for which ye strive ! *Thou* spurn and trample upon the ‘Heart of Steel !’ Go ! thou hast now given me cause, indeed, for prayer ! I will pray well that victory comes not near thee ! and if it be sooth that Raymond is in the host of his King, oh, may his lance be strong ! his sword be sharp ! and *He*, in whose hand is victory, clothe his charger’s neck with

thunder ! Thou hast seen him, with his single arm, cast the strongest of English chivalry from saddle and stirrup ; and, if I pray that, in the coming battle, he crosses not *thy* career, know, proud Earl, that it tenders *thy* safety—not his ! for that I would not thy blood should stain his lance.

“Go !” she concluded, “strive with *my* Sovereign for a crown to which *thine*, Robert of Normandy, is lawful heir, not *thou*, usurping Rebel ! Peril in thy unjust cause ten thousand lives, and win or lose as Heaven determines ! But I will show thee, Earl or King, that there is *one* ever-open door of freedom for Constance de Mowbray ! If thou art *worsted* in the fight, I pity thee ! If thou art *victor*, this hand may, indeed, be forced into thine, as I have heard that the crozier was forced into the Primate Anselm’s ; but, from that hour, I swear by Heaven and Earth ! food nor drink—morsel nor drop, shall ever more pass these wretched lips !”

The spirit of De Albemarle was mastered—prince and warrior as he was, the bitter inspiration of passion made her eloquence and her beauty alike terrible to the minstrel and the lover ! He felt as if he could have cast himself in contrition at her very foot ! but Matilda was

already in the boat, and De Mowbray awaiting Constance on the beach. He could only utter a few confused words of expiating sorrow, and, without one of pardon or reply, or even a parting glance, saw her rowed off to the vessel which lay ready, with sloping yards in the offing. The favoured bark hoisted sail in a few minutes, and bore gallantly away, with a brisk south-west breeze setting fair in all her canvass.

Our motto, the good old ballad-verse of Duncan Frazer, gives no inadequate description of the voyage. But who will grudge to dwell for a moment upon another and a later picture ?

“They saw the Blythe and Wandsbeck floods
Rush to the sea through sounding woods ;
At Coquet Isle their beads they tell
To the good Saint who owned the cell ;
Then did the Alne attention claim,
And Warkworth, proud of Percy’s name,—
And next they crossed themselves to hear
The whitening breakers sound so near,
Where, boiling through the rocks, they roar
On Dunstanborough’s caverned shore.
Thy tower, proud Bamborough, marked they there,
King-Ida’s Castle, huge and square ;
From its tall rock look grimly down,
And o’er the swelling ocean frown !”—

It was, and yet is—a fair sight to see, in calm or storm.

Bamborough, the castled palace of British Ida, crowns the whole area of a huge, triangular, basalt rock, rising suddenly from the sea-beach, where it is flanked with natural rampires of sand, matted together with sea-rushes, to the height of a hundred and fifty feet above low-water mark. A battlemented platform springs seventy feet higher, and the huge central Keep, or Donjon, surmounts *that* by an additional seventy. The hand of Time has now dealt heavily with its magnificence, and many of the ancient fortifications are broken and defaced by the falling of the landward cliffs upon which they stood. But when the brightening eye of Constance de Mowbray looked once more upon the home of her childhood, its crowded grandeur spread over the entire brow of the rock, without one mark of feebleness or decay.

For many miles on either side of the Castle, the country slopes with a regular descent from the high inlands to the sea. The surface of this descent is exceedingly rugged in its aspect; a great stratum of whin-stone occupying the whole space, and bearing so close a resemblance to volcanic lava as to be sometimes mistaken for it. Frequently it bursts from the gentle slope, and, in a direction almost always opposite

to the sea, presents a bold, precipitous front, composed of irregular, basaltic looking columns; large fragments of which have been broken and rolled down, forming piles of ruin at their feet in every direction. As these crags are always defended by Nature, at least on one side, and are easily defensible on the others, they have, in every age, been chosen for military purposes, —by our British ancestors for a chain of hill-forts; by their Roman conquerers for a like series of *Stations*; by the Saxon kings, and Danish and Norman Earls of Northumberland for castled palaces; and, in modern days, for a succession of telegraphs. On such a crag stood the Danish ruins of Legendary Spindleston. Such form the heights of the Holy and Farn Isles. On such arise the noble ruins of Dunstanborough; and on such the kingly towers of Bamborough look far over land and sea.

It was little more than noon—the noon of a lovely day, when the voyagers landed, leaving their vessel to run to anchorage in the little roadstead of Budle. A signal had apprised the Governor what visitors were about to disembark, and, from the beach to the castle-gate, the whole distance was lined with military, their

polished armour flashing back the bright sun-rays. A deafening shout arose as the party quitted the boat; minstrels sang their lays of welcome, and, at short intervals, the trumpets rang out in shrill accompanying flourishes.

The Earl of Northumberland welcomed his Bride to Bamborough, with a stately grace, under the portal of the great main entrance. It was a gateway upon the very brink of the south-east precipice above the sea, and upon the only accessible part of the rock, defended by huge flanking towers at either side, and by a deep ditch cut through the narrow rock communicating with the mainland. From the inner Barbican there was a covered way to a second gate, and, besides these, the Keep, a vast square structure upon the highest part of the rock, had its own defences of grim walls and towers. Through them, with the homage paid to princes, De Mowbray passed with Matilda and Constance; marshalled by the Castellan himself, and attended by a whole bevy of warders, seneschals, minstrels, and other household retainers.

After the garrison had received orders to be in immediate readiness for march, and the vociferated cry, "De Mowbray! De Mowbray!" had evinced how joyous was their obedience, a splendid

repast was served in the banquet hall ; and the bewildered Constance saw, presiding at its almost regal board, as the Countess of her father, the very person who, only a brief month before, had spoken those strange words to her in the garden of Nunna Mynstre — “ What, if in the grim towers of Bamborough, thou hadst a sharp-tongued step-dame,” &c., &c.

She gazed with the involuntary earnestness of wonder upon the Beauty of the West Marches, thus transplanted to the no less stormy borders of the North ; and who, upon *her* part, met the unconscious scrutiny with glances of triumphant significance. The Earl, husband and father to those who might well have passed for contrasted sisters, and retaining himself so much of youthful aspect and animation, as, to a stranger, would, perhaps, have indicated only an elder brother, endeavoured to familiarize both with their position, by referring to it in a manner as nearly resembling *pleasantry* as his saturnine nature could allow.

The instant their repast was finished, De Mowbray led to the highest battlements, and shewed to the delighted Matilda that splendid prospect which the platform of the Keep presents upon every hand ; and of which every feature recalled

to Constance some joyous or tender association—

“ Ah ! happy hills ! ah, pleasing shades !
Ah, fields beloved in vain ! ”

To the East, glittering like burnished gold in the sunlight, and, here and there, spotted with a sail, the German Ocean expanded its billowy glory. Far north, Berwick, then in its palmy state, flourishing and fortified, showed its dim walls and smoky battlements indistinctly through the rich hazy blue of the warm atmosphere ; a golden twinkle from their spires occasionally breaking upon the eye. Nearer, upon the left, but appearing almost to melt into these, they saw the long yellow stripe, tufted with green, of the low shores of Holy Isle, swelling upwards at last to its rocky and rounded brow, crowned with a strong castle, and overshadowing the venerable monastery of St. Cuthbert—

“ A solemn, huge, and dark-red pile,
Placed on the margin of the Isle.”

The shore line opposite was gracefully broken by successive woody knolls, Old Law, Fenwick, Beal, Haggerston, and Tweedmouth. Looking only in that direction, indeed, the view almost suggested a vast inland lake.

Glancing to the right, the picture changed.

Sea and sky, with their bright azure and glittering green, were still the only back-ground; but the foot of the Holy Isle intervened upon the left, and far opposite, they saw the columned cluster of the Farns. Beyond these, island after island, crag after crag, reef after reef, succeeded, as far as the eye could penetrate; till the spray of the "Rumble-churn" at Dunstanborough, might have struck them, as it has since done a Minstrel of Romance, when

" The foam as it broke
 Appeared like smoke
From a sea-volcano rising."

Due south, the delighted eye of Matilda wandered over Beadnell, Embleston, and Ratcheugh, to the faint distance beyond Dunstanborough; and then, looking wholly landward, up the rugged slope from Bamborough at her foot, over rocks and streams and moors, till the dim, doubtful peaks of Swinhoe Crag, and Coquet Isle, bounded and closed the view.

We must not now linger to accompany Constance in her wanderings over the locale of happy childhood; the towers, the ramparts, the chapelry, the little plot of garden ground; all that awoke so vividly the light-heartedness of the past, and the companionship of Raymond.

We must leave her to these, and to the welcome seclusion of her own turret; and listen for awhile to the conversation of De Mowbray and his bride, when—alone in *their* seclusion—the Earl demanded of the Lady if she could love the halls and towers of Bamborough as well and dearly as those of Chester?

“Better, a thousand fold!” she replied; “*so* well and dearly can I love this kingly seat, that I would not lose it for every castle upon the Western Marches. No, not for Powis Land to the boot of Shropshire! Were *I* your Castellan, great Earl, I would not yield it to *ten* beleaguering kings with all their hosts! while there was bolt to shoot or stone to hurl.”

“The beleaguering host of *one* King may content us,” said the Earl, “and to *that*—God and St. Oswyn speed us!—we will *not* yield it. Nor shall it come to trial, if we have grace and fortune to meet the tyrant in open field. But, were it so, Bamborough would laugh to scorn his raging worst. Penda, the savage Mercian—he who had slain five monarchs—stormed it in vain. As vainly, usurping Eardulph, when a son of the far-famed Alfred fled hither from his grasp. The wretched Waltheof from these walls defied Malcolm of Scotland; and when

Cospatrick had ravaged Cumberland far and near, within these walls he piled his booty, and mocked all threats of the angry Scots; King, Lords, and Churls."

"Kings may be mocked and foiled," returned the Lady, "that have the rage and fiery spleen of dragons. How lightly, then, the sceptred daws and jays, that flutter only while calm skies brighten their plumage, and the hawk sleeps or preys not!"

"Why, they are plume-plucked at the first swoop:" replied De Mowbray; "thus have been many Saxon dreamers, the royal nothings before our soaring Bastard; kinged and un-kinged—crowned and dis-crowned—throned and cloistered, all 'twixt change and change of the moon. But they of the Norman strain are of other mould and mettle. *They* peak and pine not—neither do they dwindle. They are the eagle and vulture—things that rend and tear, and have their gory eyries built so high, that Vengeance itself flies after with weary wing, and, it may be, drops upon shattering cliffs beneath."

"What, then, is Rufus?" said Matilda.

"Such, and no less," answered her Lord;
"His blood is flame—his heart hath the raging

pulse of a thousand. All his Father from crown to toe! He will fight for his threatened throne to its last step—load the earth with dead, and the air with cursing cries; and have no thought that land or sea holds a grave for *him*!”

“Well,” resumed the Countess, “this bird of terror once stricken, and at rest—what of the King that follows—the *gentle* Stephen?”

She fixed her eye upon De Mowbray, while thus speaking, with a meaning look, which could not escape him.

“Stephen,” he replied, “is of their haughty stock; bred out of their bloody strain; and hath *that* in him which thou nor I, noble Matilda, nor one of our confederacy, need shame to bow to; albeit, some masking, harping, wandering follies, throw stain upon it.”

“*Blot it all o’er*, my noble Lord;” replied Matilda, “make drunk with folly the spirit that, when ambition calls, should set its forward step firm as a marble pillar on its base. Look to him well, great Earl—a minstrel will one day snatch at your Chancellor’s wand. Himself, for a dainty love-lay, will part his very realm with a Troubadour; and even his Queen, the gentle Constance, may shake him to her foot, if she be angry with him in minstrel mood—O, school her

well, my Lord, to queen it wisely ; or there is *one*, at least, in the realm, to whom allegiance will be a jest."

"Why, lovely slanderer," said the Earl, "King Stephen hath an early traitor in thee, methinks ; but 'tis not so. Constance shall walk by thy counsel ; and *I* will look well that *his* sceptre turn not to a harp-wrest."

"Oh, princely Northumberland !"——exclaimed the Countess—and was then silent—but *looked* upon him with the meaning eyes, which told, at least, that what was *untold* sat near her heart.

"What wouldst thou, Lady ?"

"Much ; but have no voice to speak it. I would have greatness greatly borne ; and shallow, glittering, lightly-humoured things still hold their course and level. I would have nations—*one*, at least—king'd with the wise and strong, and not with bubbles that scarce last the blowing."

"Matilda !"

"Oh, my Lord, my Lord ! had power and wisdom been twin-gifts to *one* bosom I wot of—had the spirit that braves a king been yoked with the shrewd and subtle one which makes revenge itself but a stepping-stone to all beyond

—*then* had there been an Earl of Northumberland who would have shaken a Tyrant's throne to purpose! who would have made this Castle once more a Palace—who would have left the gay and shallow, even though a Monarch's blood ran in their veins, to joust in wood and wold—tilt at the quintain—and harp and 'vir-i-lai' in hall and bower. Then—aye—*then* Matilda de Aquila had seen ——." She fixed her keen dark eye again upon him—and was again silent.

"Seen what?" exclaimed the Earl, a little sternly, and yet impatient to hear the word spoken.

"A King of England! to whom she could have bowed with pride and joy! whose sceptre, half iron and half gold, treason could never break. A King who would have been mighty at home and feared abroad; loved by the noble few, and dreaded by the million base. Such had *then* been, and such will Stephen of Albemarle *never be!*"

"I understand thee, my fair councillor," said the Earl, "but *that* King methinks would have been so *Queened*, one empire had been too little—too narrow for their ambition—ha? Bethink thee, lovely Maud! there are who—lacking the

golden *name* of King or Queen—have yet the pomp—the pride—the state—aye, and perchance, double the *power*, of the puppets so gilded!”

“Never!” said Matilda, “*the name is power*. To *that* the many-headed thing falls down—pours out its treasures—sues to be trod upon!—O, my great lord! they that climb high mountains, e’en but for a boast, content them not but with *the top-most peak*; one little step wanting to *that*, and they have achieved nothing. Nay! I am dumb. But in my dreams—and *they* sure are no traitors—a voice will call to me, ‘DE MOWBRAY SHOULD BE KING!’”

“Peace,” said the Earl, “we will talk of this hereafter—it may be that ——— tush! we prate of treasures that sleep yet in mines undug.”

He paced the apartment with quickened steps; and, in *him*, even *that* symptom of irritation denoted a feeling more disturbed than his wont.

“Yes — ” he exclaimed at last, pausing in front of his Countess, “Thou—*thou*, Matilda! hadst been indeed a Queen for the Monarch of broad Europe! and—had the dye been so cast—which it is not and cannot be—Robert de

Mowbray had made no feeble shadow of a Monarch—no sickly, silken thing of gold and velvet—I had been——tush ! tush ! we dream, we dream, we dream ! Get thee to Constance, gentle Maud !”

And to Constance the *gentle* Maud went accordingly ; to sound the depths and shallows of *her* ambition—if ambition she had—to learn her personal feelings towards De Albemarle, and how far, in any event, the splendid bribe of a crown would influence one so young and so unworldly.

It is needless to portray the interview, or to state the result. The transparent mind and heart of Constance could hide little from the keen deep-reading Matilda, who soon took assurance that, with a little art, the union so galling to *her* pride might yet be prevented. She even ventured, but in those tones of sarcastic ambiguity which it was her policy to play off upon all but the Earl, to applaud her step-daughter's repugnance to the marriage, and to advise, at least, steady refusal until after the approaching battle ; if, indeed, sufficient interval occurred to suggest such a proposal.

That interval was *not* to occur.

Next morning a horseman rode with jaded

courser to the barriers, and demanded, impatiently, to be led straight to the Earl.

"Good news or bad, De Lacy?" cried the latter, as his visitor advanced with the air of one whose tidings gave full exemption from ceremony.

"Passing good!" answered the Baron. "The Tyrant is marching hither with every banner of his strength, and so, too, by other and nearer paths, and with all *our* host, are Stephen de Albemarle and Hugh-le-Loup."

"I thank God!" exclaimed De Mowbray.—
"If Stephen *first* make good his march, and we conjoin before the van of the foe be up—St. George! a battle may be fought and gained before to-morrow's sun-down! Good, good, De Lacy, what more? What of the siege of Durham?"

"Raised," said the Baron. "It was the vanguard of their power, under the Constable De Miles, that lay before it. Loudly were they defied from the stout walls; and loudly, as we had news by our scouts at eve, did they threaten to avenge it; hanging and thrusting forth of eyes being their gentlest words. Thereupon, well-minded to strike the first blow, we arrayed a band at night-fall—a thousand horse, and

some ten score of foot, with lance and bow ; took ford at ebb of tide westward of the New Castle, and, with the first peep of dawn, rushed like a swollen river upon Milo de Miles ! Down went many a hot gallant, charger and knight, old spurs and new ! and, when the game was at sweetest, lo ye ! a picked troop of the beleaguered garrison sallied me forth, full knightly, with brand and mace ; and by St. George ! for as high-stomached as the Constable is, we had given him a blank *sanctus* for his morning mass, had not, of a sudden, the royal banner, broad streaming and far flashing, sent us timely note to spur steed and away ! Small need, then, to bid us pack, by 'r Lady ! but, meanwhile, we had reddened the grass, and emptied I know not what saddles, and laid hand, rescue or no rescue, upon some twenty knights of name ; no less or worse ! ”

“ Why, this is brave ! ” said De Mowbray, exultingly ; “ we have stricken the first blow—shed the first blood ! Who led this jolly troop ? ”

“ Stephen himself ; and had well nigh flung De Miles upon his last couch, but that good help came timely. ”

“ And comes fierce Rufus northward, ” said

Northumberland, "leaving two holds of strength, Tynemouth and Durham, untaken in his rear?"

"Up and away!" cried Reginald; "with every lance and banner of your power, or Rufus will himself make answer with ram and catapult upon *this* hold of strength! I promise ye we sped not back to Tynemouth to lure him thither; but, on and on, as though the word were Northward-ho! and he, deeming us, be-like, but the rear of our joint power, gave chase over hill and holt, until the game was lost to the royal hunter, by special trick; for one that well knows your savage wilds, led us by hidden paths back to the good cheer of Prior Baldwin, jolly and pert as bridegrooms!"

"My soul's on fire!" exclaimed the Earl. "What, ho! within there! Torfin!—Hubert, I would say! Hast thou told all, De Lacy?"

"No," replied the Baron; "every white hath its black, and I have colder news; but they must out. Rescue (and with a heavy hand) hath been made for Alberic du Coci!"

"Ha!"

"The bird hath flown," continued Reginald. "De Tunbridge, as ye had commanded, led him before the walls of the New Castle, and threatened lustily to torture and gibbet the poor

wight, if they within surrendered not at the first flourish of trumpet. By Mary-mother ! he that blew could scarce put brass to lip ere that accursed Raymond of the Heart of Steel, with such scanty following as I take shame to tell ye of, fell like a thunder-bolt upon the summoning band, snatched the prey from their gripe, and, to the boot of that, made prisoner of De Tunbridge himself, after hurling him from the saddle with a shock like a falling tower ! So much for the gay gallant, Sir Ilbert, and for the rescue of Alberic du Coci."

De Mowbray, like the high-bred Pirate of the Cyclades, "the mildest mannered man !" quitted the chamber without a word of rage ; but they that knew him might have read enough in his burning eye and compressed lips. He beckoned his guest to follow, and they passed to the battlements and court of guard.

Presently, the vast fortress resounded with the clang of steel, the heavy tread of men-at-arms, the cries of women, the neigh and stamp of coursers, and every sound of preparation for departure ; the departure of all but the mere number essential to man the walls against any detachment of the Royalists ; while the main body marched to the junction with De Albe-marle and Hugh-le-Loup.

"I leave thee," said Earl Robert to Matilda, as the King-like warrior pressed the would-be Queen to his bosom,—*"I leave thee, lovely Maud! but it is to return with prouder joy. Be thou my Castellan of Bamborough indeed—Victory awaits us! As the wolf against the fold—as the falcon against the quarry, go we against the Tyrant! Farewell, my Bride! my loveliest! and my bravest! Go! pour somewhat of thy spirit into Constance, whom I have left with the white cheek that shames a daughter of my race."*

And so they parted.

Meanwhile De Lacy had snatched a soldier's meal, and was about to hurry to the ballium, where a fresh horse awaited him, when his path was suddenly crossed by Constance, with the "white cheek," which had so scandalized her warlike father. Earth seemed to rock beneath him! and ocean to give up its dead! for never had the conscience-stricken villain dared to breathe even her name within the walls of Tyne-mouth, and by his instant flight to Newcastle, after the rescue from Se-Blaca's caverns, and in the never-ceasing whirl of military events which followed, he was ignorant that the heroic girl still lived and suffered. *Her spirit was now*

fixed—invulnerable—she encountered him without a start—without a shudder—without a word or gesture. She gazed upon him with cold unchanging eye, and passed with slow unvarying step into the vaulted gloom beyond. But when her gleaming form faded in the darkness, he, who would have faced a host of foes—to whom battle and storm and wreck had been familiar things—uttered a cry of terror so loud, and rushed with such blind and headlong haste to the open air of the ballium, to see human faces and hear human voices, that if, indeed, there is power given to the spirits of evil to keep surveillance over their slaves on earth, the triumph of *one* fiend, at least, was anticipated that hour, and infernal laughter might have been heard as De Lacy fled from the chambers of Bamborough!—

“’Tis conscience that makes cowards of us all!”

CHAPTER XIII.

" Out, alas ! what a grief is this !
 That princes' subjects cannot be true !
 But still the devil hath some of his,
 Will play their parts whatsoever ensue !
 Forgetting what a grievous thing
 'Tis to offend the anointed king.
 Alas, for woe !
 Why should it be so ?
 This makes a sorrowful heigh-ho !"
The King of Scots and Andrew Browne.

WE agree with the poet of the Orlando—

" Come raccende il gusto il mutare esca
 Così mi par che la mia Istoria quanto,
 Or quà, or là più variata sia
 Meno a chi l'udira nojoso fia."

And, therefore, while the Northern levies of
 the insurgents file out in long array from the
 towers of Ida, banner after banner, pennon after
 pennon, to join their Southern allies ; and while
 Matilda, lance in hand, like the presiding Genius
 of chivalry, waves adieu from the battlements,

we will outstrip them "upon imagined wing," and, for a little interval, go back to the few preceding days—to the banks of Tyne, and to Raymond Cœur d'Acier.

With respect to the gallant Squire, however, our purpose may, perhaps, be answered by setting before the reader a certain Cavalier in complete armour of trellised mail, of that blue tinge which is given by fire to steel, and whom, therefore, as is known to all readers of romance, we have a privilege to call, for distinction's sake, "*the Blue Knight*."

This personage, whom we shall merely describe as being of the precise height, bulk, strength, activity, and so on, of Raymond, and as constantly wearing either a close pyramidal helmet, or the hauberk hood, drawn over the head and neck, was an object of mysterious interest to the whole royal camp. Immediately after the successful storming of the New Castle, as related by De Lacy, he had appeared before the King upon his march, thrown himself at the royal foot, with the keys of the recovered fortress, and presenting them as an earnest of his future loyalty, prayed to be admitted in any honourable capacity to serve against the rebels. Birth, rank, name, fortunes, all were a shut book. He de-

clined to answer one question respecting them, or, rather, made it his earnest entreaty that the Monarch would not so interrogate him until he had done further and more important services in the busy scenes about to follow. Rufus, highly chivalrous, however despotic, and delighted with the youth's first achievement, willingly allowed of the incognito, and swore by St. Luke's face, that if the Springald were not yet "Right Worshipful" (as the gilded spurs did not appear), it was high time he should be so. Striking his kneeling suitor, therefore, with his sword, he bade him arise with the designation, *pro tempore*, of "*The Knight of the Stormed Castle.*"

The new chevalier seemed determined to brighten his new spurs, for, returning with fiery speed to prepare the royal entry into Newcastle, he was in time to make the equally daring and successful sally which the Baron of Newark has also described, and, by which, not only were the rebels discomfited with greatly inferior forces, but Du Coci was snatched from a dangerous captivity, and Sir Ilbert de Tunbridge made captive himself. The exploit set the stamp of the King's favour indelibly upon his unknown champion; although, for some reason, we must observe, the captor concealed the name of his prisoner from the royal ear.

Battle is generally a mid-way point between revel and funeral ; at least it has generally been so with the chivalry of this island, from the field of Hastings to that of Waterloo.

There was a banquet in the great hall of the fortress, so often mentioned in these pages, the now *Old Castle*, which originally gave name to *New-castle*, and was built by the King's brother, Robert of the Short-hose, to keep in awe both the intractable Northumbrians, and their savage enemies the Scotch. No doubt it was worth all the trouble of building, and taking and re-taking. The keep was a *Gundolf* nearly ninety feet high ; the walls were fourteen feet in thickness ; the outworks corresponded ; and the whole stood high upon the river bank, so as to command not only the town but a considerable reach of the stream, and the only bridge across it for some distance.

In the hall, now, alas ! a common kitchen, although decorated with some mixed fragments of arms and armour, all of a much later date than our tale, King William Rufus feasted his loyal Barons and Knights upon the eve of battle, and played the royal host with all the careless jollity and humour proper to "Li Reis Ros," (as the old minstrel, Wace, calls him,) when amongst the favoured of his lieges in convivial

moments. Around sat the stately Baronage of England; the noble and gallant ancestors (with all their faults) of the *most* noble and gallant nobility (with all *their* faults) in the world.

There were the Percies and the Bigods, and the Grantmisnills; the Mortimers and the Staffords; the Clares, the Beauchamps—the Montgomerys—the Warennes—the De Veres—and a long list of names mighty for good and evil in English annals.

There, too, quaffing, perhaps, from the same goblet, and carousing with one heart, sat the “*forbears*” of future aspirants to Scottish royalty; the Baliols and the Bruces,* both gifted by the Conqueror with estates in Mother England. There, in all the distinction of conquest and mystery of concealment, sate the Blue Knight of the Stormed Castle; and, near him, attended in especial by our worthy friend Nicholas, appeared Sir Alberic du Coci, Castellan, at length, in good earnest, of those coveted towers. And there, strange to say, and, indeed, to the surprise (perhaps disgust) of many, sat the venerable Jodesac *cum Barbá*

* The lovely estate of Castle Eden, half-way betwixt Wear and Tees, was given by the Conqueror to an ancestor of King Robert Bruce.

looking exceedingly like some white-bearded prophet of the primal day, feasting with the armed captains of hundreds and captains of thousands of the rejoicing host to which he had prefigured victory. Nor after such mention, must we irreverently forget the presence of the Bishops of Rochester and of Lincoln, besides some ecclesiastics of lower grade; Priors looking for fat abbacies, and Abbots longing for translocation.

Last, but far from least, and neither Earl, Baron, Knight, Squire, Jew, nor (as yet) Bishop, but as bold, as turbulent, as blythesome, as rapacious, and as stately as the whole, there sat the great Justiciary Flambard, who, upon a special mission, (the mortgage of Guienne and Poictou for money to equip their Duke for the Crusades), had hurried down to the Royal camp, and sate now within whispering distance of the King's ear. *Council* was thus economically mixed up with *revel*, and the Monarch and his favourite might confer at pleasure, without "displacing the general mirth."

"Now, tell me," said Milo de Miles, apart to the Marshal, "what smooth conceit in yonder paper doth the King love so well that his lungs are tickled thus to crowing?"

"Some biting jest of the good Ranulph's;" answered Montgomery. "Some fresh device, I warrant, for the emptying of other men's purses. By our Lady! no man's pottage is safe from *their* spoon; Knight or wight—Earl or churl."

The random shaft hit the bull's eye. Rufus, never so gay as upon the eve of battle, especially if *money-raising* furnished matter of conversation, laughed and chuckled over a scroll given him by Flambard, who merely curled his thin lip with the sardonic smile which was his utmost visible indulgence of mirth. The scroll was headed "Fines and Oblatos," and the King read from it, with great gusto, the following, and other minutes of like decency:—

"*Imprimis*.—Twenty marks from Richard the son of Gilbert, for the King's help, that he may recover his debt from the Jews.

"*Item*.—Five marks, and twenty lampreys, and two hundred hens; from the wife of Hugh de Neville, that she may visit her husband in prison for one day and one night.

"*Item*.—Twenty marks and twenty shads, from Peter de Peraris, for leave to salt fishes as Peter Chevron used to do.

"*Item*.—Two Norway hawks and a hundred

shillings from Ralph de Mitford, that the King will protect him in the matter of Roger Bertram's mother.

“ *Item.*—A hundred marks and two palfreys with housings, from Hugh, Archdeacon of Wells, that his concubine and his children may be let out upon bail.

“ *Item.*—A hundred lampreys, and ten peacocks, and one tun of good wine from the Bishop of Winchester, for his not putting the King in mind to give garters and a girdle to the Countess of Gloucester.

“ *Item.*—Ten marks, and five palfreys, with housings, and a cast of hawks with bells and bewits thereunto, from Robert de Burton, that the King will hold his tongue about Henry Pinel's wife.”

Such were the substantial jests which amused King William ; and such the modest registration of Exchequer Barons, in those golden days of equitable government.

Du Coci now told the strange tale of his adventure in Sé-Blaca's caverns, and for his pains excited much more merriment than sympathy.

“ By St. Luke's face !” cried Rufus, with one of his tremendous laughs, “ much *fear* was there

and little peril ! the saw is old, Sir Alberic, and well approved, they *drown* not that have other weird fore-doomed."

" I thank heaven for my company then !" answered the Knight ; " but I can tell ye, my Liege, it was well nigh choking time with the strongest of us ; for as gamesome as the matter seems in this presence."

" And how looked our gracious Cousin King Stephen ?" asked the Monarch.

" As like a true Prince," replied Du Coci honestly, " as a false one might.—Looking upon the billows that came on like lions, as though they would go back as such at his royal glance. Little cared the roarers for *that*, and *would have done*, had a *true* Prince been there ; even he* who once asked, ' Didst thou ever hear of a King that was drowned ? ' "

" And how bore him the lost varlet Raymond, De Mowbray's fiery gallant ? ha ? he of the Heart of Steel ?"

" Why, with stout heart, as the Heart of Steel should," answered the Knight. " I say it not in discourtesy, but even your Grace's *new* Gallant yonder, the Knight of the Stormed Castle, had borne him no better."

* *Rufus himself, at Dartmouth.*

"And the remaining twain?" said Rufus, "what of them?"

"One," replied the Castellan, "whom *I* will answer for, wished himself in Abraham's bosom, if better might not be; and t'other cursed as horribly as though he had been already in Hell, and knew that *worse* could not be."

"Rebellious dog!" cried the King. "Ocean hath cast him back to earth that fire and steel may work upon him! and we will have his lands and moveables—manors and castles! his, and our loyal kinsman's, Lupus, and the great Devil, De Mowbray's, and those of all their faction! Marry, my loving lieges, 'tis but in good time! for our Welsh wars, and these home bickerings, and building castles, and (in our love to mother church!) abbeys and priories, have shorn our treasury of its last golden fleece."

"Chiefly," said Flambar, "and I speak it with solemn reverence, your Grace's singular love of holy church! building, as ye have said, huge monasteries (as, for example, of Carlisle,) and priories (as of Armethwaite,) and hospitals, (as of St. Leonard's, in York.) The Lord be bountiful unto you and us! and make us thankful for your heavenly-mindedness! in especial,

the servants of mother church, our bishops, abbots, and priors, who, if grace be given them, will, of a surety, come forward with heaped cofters in this time of pinching need !—I crave your Grace's leave to fill this goblet to all and sundry such holy prelates, wishing them the healthful spirit to give largely out of their boundless abundance !"—

The toast went round with solemn mockery.

" I thank the great Justiciary," said a spirited Ecclesiastic present, " for my own poor part herein ; and pray well that he remember him what goodly pickings and gleanings fell of late from the Abbey of Waltham to the Royal Exchequer."

" Good, pious souls !" exclaimed the Favourite, with the same sneering gravity.—" Over bountiful were they at our request !—but, as ensample to others, I will publish it aloud in Gath and Askalon, and all the cities of the Philistines. Six thousand six hundred and sixty-six pounds,* current money of his Grace's realm, did they impart unto us *as a benevolence*, by melting of chalices, and pixies, of tabernacles,

* A modest *fact*. Very correctly stated by the Minister, such being the sum to a nicety. "*Forsooth, a great arithmetician !*"

and ampuls ; and candlesticks and philatories, and basins and chrysmatories ; and by a modest yielding up of copes and crosses, and albs, and stoles, and chasubles, and morses. Nevertheless," continued the facetious Procurator, "there are, even amongst the ungodly, those who cast in their mite with a willing heart ; as, for example, my Liege and Lords, *this* pitifully poor and perishing man, Jodesac of Winchester, who, in his unworldliness, scarce knowing a shekel from a bezant, hath yet journied hither for very love and loyalty, to make tender to his Grace of some poor sixty merks !"

"And we will deal with him after his desert," said the King. "Let him advance, and make deposit before all this presence ; that he may be as a burning light to the Synagogue, and put to shame the Gentiles of niggard hand ! Hast thou those shekels of gold and shekels of silver under thy gaberdine, good Israelite ?"

"Thou art gamesome, O King !" said the child of the Promise. "But remember, I pray thee, that the sixty merks were as a price and a sum for the power of thy royal breath. Hast thou, indeed, turned back the youth to the paths of the steps of his fathers ? and made him to renounce alike the fierce and superstitious doings of thy people ?"

"Infidel dog!" exclaimed the Bishop of Rochester, in high wrath at this exordium.

"Stiff-necked abomination!" cried his brother of Lincoln.

"Get thee behind us, Satan!" shouted a third Dignitary.

While a fourth crossed himself and repeated the adjuring formula :

*"Per hoc signum sancti crucis,
Libera me de malignis," &c. &c.*

"Peace, men of zeal!" cried the Monarch ;
"and do thou, Jodesac, deposit thy small nothing of a gift. The shekels, I say, Jew ! the shekels!"

Jodesac looked about him, as if to gather from surrounding faces what course were best, and then, suddenly, as if distrusting his own resolution, laid a small bag at the King's foot, which the nimble fingers of the Justiciary closed upon like harpy talons.

"Stand forth," said the Monarch, "our Castellan, Alberic du Coci. Hast thou a squire hight 'Nicholas with the Sword?'"

"I have, my Liege," answered the Knight ;
"and the sweet youth is here"—beckoning forward the modest Nicholas.

"Who made thee a lover of pork?" said the King, "with that beaked visage of thine? Back

to thy trough and wallow ! go ; kiss the beard of thy father, and repent thee into thy birth-right. If not, by St. Luke's face, I will put long divorce 'twixt thee and swine's flesh ! I will have thee shaven a monk upon yonder grim islands of Farn, and scourged from *matins* to *compline* with knotted thongs !”

“ I swear to thee, great King !” answered Nicholas, “ that I am under a vow to St. Abraham, St. Isaac, and St. Jacob, to do my devoir in the coming battle ! and that I will be shaven from crown to toe, and scourged from Pentecost to mid-winter ere I become forsworn ! I call these holy Bishops to witness, that I am a Christian sinner and no Jew !”

“ Thou hearest, Jodesac,” resumed the King. “ Thou hearest ! the knave is a stiff-necked knave ! he must needs keep his vow ; I grieve to say it ; and doubly, yea, trebly do I grieve to give thee back the shekels. But we are just, even as thou art generous ; and, seeing that we have not wrought out fully the matter in hand, will return thee the price appointed, saving only that poor moiety which is righteously due to us for having laboured in thy cause ; to wit, thirty marks ! Divide the spoil, good Ranulph, and let the son of Jacob depart in peace.”

Jodesac shrugged his venerable shoulders ; and then, without speaking, shook his thin fingers in the face of Nicholas ; while the Minister, with a gravity which convulsed the board, told out thirty pieces of money, and then gave back the reduced purse to the Jew.

“ And canst thou,” said the latter, undismayed by the mighty presence in which he stood ; “ Canst thou do this thing, and rend from me that which is mine, even whilst the feast brings merriment to thee, and wine maketh thine heart glad ? ”

“ I can,” returned the ready-witted and brazen-fronted Flambard ; “ for thou, Jodesac, knowest that ‘ a feast is made for laughter, and wine maketh merry,’ but ‘ *money answereth for all things !* ’ Go—make thy face shine ; let not thine heart be at thy left side ! Go ! ”

“ I go,” answered the stately Jew, “ with a *sick* heart, for I have conceived chaff and brought forth stubble. I depart from amongst ye, seeing that it is ever as the Wisdom of old spake—‘ Behold ! the Prince requireth, and the Judge asketh for a reward. They do evil with both hands earnestly—the best of them is as a brier—the most upright is sharper than a thorn-hedge ! ’ ”

“ Fill full, my lieges,” said Rufus, after the

jest of the thirty merks was over, and the Jew had departed, "and drink we to the speedy division into baronies of those vast earldoms, Northumberland and Chester. By St. Luke's face! we will find finger-room in the pasty for laics and clerics both! Who here of mother church would be an Abbot, when we have hanged up yon burly Baldwin of Tynemouth?"

"I, good my liege!" cried a portly Prior, "and will consider your Grace's need in these pinching days!"

"And I, great King!" shouted another "round, fat, oily man of cloisters;" "I would full fain be the shepherd of that flock, and I will consider thine exchequer well! I will lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance!"

"And what wilt *thou* do?" said Rufus to a pale, grave monk, whose eye had turned from one of these Simoniacal traffickers to the other, with genuine glances of scorn and detestation; "what wilt *thou* give, ha?"

"Nothing," replied the Monk, with quiet firmness.

"Nothing!" repeated the King.

"Nothing!" echoed Flambard, in mock astonishment—"Nothing? Bethink thee, good book-a-bosom! bethink thee! Nothing! Knowest

thou the *riches* of yonder monastery? its lands? its tithes? its villas? its mills? advowsons? fisheries? and rents? its fairs? its rights of *sac* and *socne*? *infangeon theof*? tol and team? its privilege of courts and wreck of the sea? ha? Knowest thou all this, and sayst thou will give *nothing*?"

"I *hear* it," said the Priest, "and will give NOTHING. It were a deadly sin."

"Then, by St. Luke's face! thou art the honestest fellow of the three," exclaimed Rufus, "and shalt be Abbot of Tynemouth, without payment of one sinful penny! Fill me a goblet there! fill all, and drink we to the Abbot elect; he hath saved me, perchance, from seeing the devil caper upon money-bags, as Saxon Edward, the crowned Confessor, saw him upon those filled with the Danegelt Tax."

"Aye," said the Bishop of Rochester (an old thorn in the King's side) "*that* tax, great Sovereign, for the levying of which Archbishop Aldred cursed thy father with his dying breath!"

"Why," answered Rufus, "ye be good cursers, ye priests—curses are as meat and drink to ye—nay, ye boast of being clothed with them as with a garment; or of clothing others, I know not well which. But, to-morrow, he that fights not shall

pray ; and, he that prays not for *us*, I will clothe *him* in a doublet of stone, with hose of iron. Sir Knight of the Stormed Castle ! thou that hast stricken the first blow ! taken the first stronghold ! made the first knightly prisoner ! what sayest *thou* ? Shall we have splintering of lances, and cleaving of helms and shields to thy heart's content ?"

"Let me not answer as a boaster, great King !" replied the Blue Knight ; "I have done no more than the least here would have done, with the like bitter prompting. For this fortress, I took it with borrowed power—the power of Sir Alberic du Coci—and upon him (who would have wrought as fairly had he been free) be all the honour and fair fame. I crave but to dispose of *one* prisoner until the battle be over, and *then* that, if my prayer be still for mercy upon his head, *that* prayer may be heard."

"Tush !" said Rufus, little accustomed to requests so modest, "be near me when the battle joins." And then, turning to Montgomery, De Miles, and others of his more mature chivalry, the shrewd son of the Conqueror spoke of past victories, jested upon past follies, and said a thousand things which, in the poetical language of Scripture, were as "dew upon the grass" to the spirits of all around.

So passed the evening with the "court and camp" of William Rufus; but an early hour finished the revel, and the first beams of the morning sun showed

"Battle's magnificently-stern array!"

The live-long night the clink of armourers' hammers had been heard every where within the double walls of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and, very soon after day-break, the whole Host, five-and-twenty thousand strong, was equipped for march and battle. These were fighting-men, exclusive of the usual hangers-on of an army, sutlers, women, and "camp-followers," in general.

The greater part heard mass, and made confession; and the Bishops of Rochester and Lincoln officiated before the King and some of the chief nobles, in the little chapel, whose beautiful ruins are still the pride of the towers of "Courthose."

The Pursuivants-at-arms of the Lord High Marshal then rode along the crowded ranks, and, at every banner-stand, proclaimed the statute of the King for military observance, as follows:—

THE STATUTE.

I. *For Obeysance*.—That no man be so hardy to raise banner or pennon of St. George, to draw together, or withdraw men from the host; nor

to cry "havoc !" for token of pillage ; nor to take prisoner a child under fourteen, unless he be a lord, a knight, or a worshipful man's son ; nor to disarray him in the battle for any tidings that come into the host.

II. *For Holy Church*.—That no man be so hardy, unless he be a priest, to touch the Sacrament of God's body, nor the vessel which it is in ; nor to slay any man of holy church, unless he be armed ; nor to make prisoner any such holy man. Upon pain to be drawn and hanged, or, at the best, to be imprisoned, and his goods forfeit, and his body at the King's will.

III. *For Watch and Ward*.—Every man to keep watch and ward duly and truly, night and day in his herbergage* ; to waste no victuals ; and to look well that his men-at-arms and archers make no *raids*†, without license of the Constable or Marshal.

IV. *For Prisoners*.—He that first bears a man to the earth and taketh his "fey,"‡ to him he shall belong ; but, if he leave him, and another come after that, and take his "fey," then shall he be prisoner to them both ; but in the ward

* Lodging.

† Pillaging excursions.

‡ Faith. Pledge of yielding and submission.

of the first; and, in respect that the enemy be all rebels and traitors, no man to put a prisoner to ransom, but to bring him, when the battle is stricken and done, to the ward of the Constable or Marshal.

V. *For Provision against time of Siege and Leaguer.*—Every man to have, or to make him a fair and goodly faggot* of thirteen feet in length, the same to be without leaves. Every Captain and Constable to have, or to make him a goodly fair stake of eleven feet in length, the same to be without knot-gaule or freat†. Every seven men-at-arms to have or to make them a goodly fair ladder, strong and sufficient, and of fifteen rounds; and every two yeomen to have or to make them a goodly fair *pavesse*‡ of boards, that the one may hold while the other shooteth.

VI. *For 'Haniour and Bearing.*—That no man be so hardy to quarter him in any other wise than by assignment of herbergage from the Marshal or Constable, upon pain of losing his best horse; or, if an archer or a foot-boy, to have his ears cut off. Nor any man to go into any herbergage where any woman lyeth *in gesem*§, to rob or pill of any good which longeth to her

* *Faggot.* For the filling up of castle ditches.

† Imperfection or canker.

‡ Large shield. § *In gesem.* Child-bed.

refreshing. Nor any to give reproaches to any because of the country, or kind, or strain he is of; nor to say any villany thereunto—through the which villany-saying there may fall out sudden manslaughter, to the shame of the camp, and the scandal thereof, and the great scathe of the cause of his royal grace the King;—on pain of hanging and drawing, or, at the best, to be imprisoned, and his goods forfeit, and his body at the King's disposal.

These ordinances proclaimed, the Royal army marched through the north gate of the "New Castle," in well-ordered battalia; banners waving, and pennons fluttering; armour flashing, and music thrilling. It consisted of about three thousand* well equipped men-at-arms; Earls, Barons, Knights, Esquires, and their substitutes; four thousand archers, and twelve thousand infantry, including scouts, and perhaps two thousand of what were denominated "naked foot," as of inferior arms and equipments; wearing only a defence of *courbilly*, or jacked leather,

* In computing the numbers of an army, every man-at-arms should be counted as *three*; each having two squires, one to bear his lance, &c., the other as "body squire."—See *Froizart*. This brings the heavy cavalry of the Royalists in the text to nine thousand.

instead of the jazerant or mailed frock of their fellows; and carrying only a pike or mallet, whilst the better furnished bore lances, swords, battle-axes, and brown-bills.

The whole body of infantry was divided into thousands, hundreds and twenties; corresponding in some degree with our modern regiments, companies and squads. The cavalry, into *constabularies*, or small bodies of twenty-five or thirty men, and so named from the *constables* or petty officers who commanded them. Two of these might be under the pennon of a knight, and at least four were requisite for the dignity of a banneret; that is to say, thirty-five men-at-arms, each attended by two of inferior rank. These were the redoubtable Norman chivalry, whose fame rang through the world, harnessed from crown to toe in mail of proof; mounted upon heavy chargers, and armed with lance, sword, battle-axe, mallet of arms and dagger of mercy; the broad *heater* shield hanging from the neck, and a massy helmet protecting the head.

The *hobilers*, or light-armed prickers, for reconnoitring, bringing intelligence, intercepting, harassing, and pursuing, formed another distinct body. They rode small active horses, wore brigantines and bacinets, and were armed

with sword, spear, knife, and some with long-bow.

Lastly, the archers, of whom many were English, and deadly shooters of the "cloth-yard shaft," marched in coats of mail and skull-caps; with bow, target and sword; the quiver, containing twenty-four arrows, hung at their back upon the right side, balanced upon the other by a huge heavy *maul*, for the purpose of dispatching the wounded. Each Bowman also carried with him two or three sharp stakes (like the classical *vallu*) to be fixed in the ground, as a sort of *chevaux-de-frize* against cavalry.

Amongst the "naked foot" were three or four hundred Welsh, wild and desperate looking savages, totally without defensive armour, almost without clothing, and carrying only a *glaive*, or a long knife, which they used with fearful dexterity.

Such was the host of Rufus, as it marched out of Newcastle. The scouts first, well mounted, and followed by a sufficient number of hobilers and archers for their protection. The masters of offices, provosts, and other camp functionaries were next in advance. Then the main vanguard, both foot and horse; men-at-arms, archers and hobilers; headed by the Constable

De Miles. The Royal Standard followed, borne by the first esquire of the esquiery, and attended by chosen knights, heralds, pursuivants, and pages upon trapped war-horses, leading others for the King's use, loaded with his helmets and lances. Next, a band of trumpeters preceded the banner of the Monarch, borne by Fitz-Hammon, the first chamberlain of his household, and in like manner attended by knights, pages, and heraldic officers. Rufus, himself, rode after these upon a white hackney, amidst a glittering concourse of the pride of Anglo-Norman nobility. The rear-guard, a thousand men-at-arms, and nearly twice as many of other denominations, was brought up by Hugo de Montgomery, the Lord High Marshal.

They slept that night at Morpeth, the castle of which continued to be stoutly defended by Roger de Merley; and there the surprise of the monarch was excited by the non-appearance of the "Knight of the Stormed Castle." No one could make any report of him after the banquet, either upon quitting Newcastle, or during the subsequent march; and the shadow of a moment's misgiving crossed the King's brow when it was said, that one had seen from his "herbergage" the Knight who was captured by

the Blue Cavalier, when Du Coci was rescued, ride out of the main north sally-port of the town; at a late hour of the preceding night, attended by his squire.

At a late hour, however, of *that* night, in Morpeth, letters were conveyed by unknown hands to the royal lodging, and to that of Sir Alberic du Coci.

To Sir Alberic, the writer says,—

“ If we meet not again, in respect that a fierce battle must soon be stricken, have kind and dear remembrance of one who loved well the Knight of the Broken Lance. And let not calumny breathe upon my name for this departure and absence, which are well-purposed, answer they never so ill. I am not, indeed, so sad of cheer but that a hope keeps well with me to greet thee once more, and to reveal much that I have yet hidden: yet, should that hope prove false, I will but desire of the good Sir Alberic to find time and place for so much whispered breath in the ear of Constance de Mowbray as may tell her that *he* (alas ! she will guess *whom*) was true to Honour and to *HER*. Be that the sole epitaph of one she *might* have loved.

“ As I journied, last night, to whence this is written, a little watch-fire, gleaming in a wood, drew me to play the listener. Thou wilt clutch at thy dagger-hilt to learn that they within were the accursed Saxon Wolfsic and the fierce crone his sister ! *My* fingers tingled to grasp, at once, *his* throat and the steel that should pierce it through ! But their words charmed me to be still and listen, and I held back the hand of vengeance as he that holds a bloodhound, when the cry is loud and the scent is strong. But, O the listened words ! O the dark tale they tell ! If the fiend Reginald de Lacy escape *my* hand, upon *thy* soul, brave Knight, be the quest bound to hunt him to Destruction ! But I yet trust that God drew him but from the fierce ocean to give him, in due time, to my fiercer revenge ! This *Wolfsic* too, a haunting devil to me long, I learned—but it is not for scribe-work to tell thee—meanwhile, the fiend he serves hath again saved him. When this is in *thy* hand, the King too will have a scroll from him who bids thee, again and again, forget not

“ The Knight of the Stormed Castle.”

The epistle to the Monarch was as follows :—

“ My Liege will know, ere the Host be long risen, that *my* pennon is not under his royal banner. If this be not redeemed a hundred fold when the battle joins, I will take heed that life hath no longer date than honour; meanwhile, I conjure your royal grace, by our Lady, and by St. George, and by every saint in Heaven, *beware of an ambuscade upon to-morrow's march!* Pass not forest or crag without quick espial of scouts, and, above all, if a lance be lifted with *two* streamers at its head, halt banner there and then! and let a picked squadron sweep round and charge in flank. My soul upon the issue!”

“ And *mine*,” exclaimed the King, “ upon *thy* faith!”

And then, summoning the Constable and Marshal, he gave order for *their* observance of the warning thus conveyed.

At sunrise they pursued their march in the direction of Alnwick, which was one of the strongholds of the rebels, secured for them by Ivo de Vesco; but as certain information had now reached the King, that De Albemarle and De Mowbray were advancing to meet him in open field, no time was lost in attempting to invest it.

Glancing to the right from the scene of De

Mowbray's triumph over the Scottish King, they crossed the Alne at Hawkshill, and pursued the coast road by Long Houghton, Sterwick, and Standford.

And here it is that our Geography first fails us. By some defacing stains, and other injuries, the very valuable and curious MS.* which we have hitherto followed, as to main facts and military movements in this history, becomes suddenly and provokingly illegible. No research in other quarters has yet enabled us to supply the hiatus. We are, indeed, inclined to suspect

* It is well known that in historical productions of this kind every deviation from ordinary history, that is to say, from the works of Messrs. Henry, Hallam, Hume, Lingard, &c. is attributable to certain valuable MSS., possessed exclusively by the author or editor, and incontestably more valid and copious than the mere monkish chronicles which the above gentlemen have so implicitly followed. Such were the literary treasures of those great and fortunate men, Sir Arthur Wardour, Dr. Dryasdust [and Captain Clutterbuck; and the author of RUFUS has to boast his own felicity in possessing the sole copy of an invaluable MS. (a history of the Red King) accredited beyond a shadow of suspicion, and which he now makes known to the world by the title of *The Boke of Bebbanburg*; i. e. the Book of Bamborough. Whenever, therefore, in his present pages, there appears a variation of statement from common history, the reader may be assured that it is upon the sole but indubitable authority of the said MS., as we shall not fail to apprise him by appending, marginally, the words "*Boke of Bebbanburg.*"

that, from false rumours and other causes, some confused movements and counter-marches had taken place on both sides, for it is plain, at last, that *an ambush* was laid for the Royal Host at the foot of one of those singular ranges of Basalt which we have already described as occurring continually in that district, but the *precise* situation of which we certainly cannot "lay down" with accuracy. The writer, however, (of the MS. we mean) has given us the scene, in his quaint way, with so many identifying touches, that to those who are familiar with "bleak Northumbria," the *locale* may, perhaps, be sufficiently clear.

It was near the close of evening when a cry of "Halt, banner!" ran along the vanguard of the Royal Host, and they who rode forward to meet the scouts hurrying back to the main body, saw before them a range of basalt crag, with a wood of thick dark foliage at its foot, a chain of little hills upon the one side, and a brook of rapid water, whose banks were also wooded to some distance, upon the other.

There was no sign of life, except a few ravens hovering far above; but the practised eye of Milo de Miles saw the likelihood of the spot for "miching mallico" as Hamlet calls it.

"Ride out, Sir Alberic," he cried to Du Coci, "and bring sure word what manner of road is yonder."

The Knight put spurs to his hackney, and was soon within arrow flight of the pass, for so the road might be called as it wound between the forest and the crag foot.

There was no sound to break the twilight stillness, except the light breeze that waved only the lightest branches—the distant rush of the brook—and an occasional neigh from the steeds of the men-at-arms.

Had the good Sir Alberic been only upon "errant quest," like the wandering knights who sought adventures "by wood and wold," and lingered at pleasure upon every spot that charmed them, he might well have doffed his casque and shield, after their romantic wont, and reclined him to meditate upon his "ladye-love."

The broken fragments of rock rolled down from the columned front of the great mass, lay in every variety of grotesque form and fantastic grouping. Nor was the picturesque wildness of the scene that of sterility and gloom. The soil, in sheltered crevices of the crags, was rich with decay of moss and leaves, and with earths washed down by the rains from above; and there the

purple-belled rod of the fox-glove nodded over its broad grey leaves; and thyme and heather, and wild sage and horehound, the blue hare-bell and the honey-suckle, quaffed the dews of heaven as gratefully, and seemed as lavish of their unregarded sweets, as though they flourished under the culture of some gentle hermit-lady, "herself a fairer flower." Luxuriant lichens, too, everywhere clothed the sides of the columns, their grey tints harmonizing well with the leaves of the mountain ash, and the silvery coat of the birch; and contrasting as finely with the deep green of the whin, the furze, and the wild dog-rose.

It was, we repeat, a fair scene, but the Knight had far other study in hand than botany or the picturesque. He looked only for the gleam of steel; he listened only for some sound of a hidden foe.

All, however, was dim, lifeless, and silent.

Quitting the saddle, and climbing a severed rock, he loosened one of its fragments, and, with his full strength, threw it amongst the shattered *debris* beyond. Its fall surprised and startled him, the sound having a *metallic* and ringing jar, so loud and sharp, that it seemed as if his missile had been hurled upon the corslet

of a giant ! Ignorant of the property of these crags to produce such sounds, Du Coci strained his eye in every direction, and almost instantly saw, above one of the highest points of the rock, a lifted pennon with *two* streamers fluttering from its head—the very signal of admonition fixed by the Blue Knight. It waved for some time in clear relief against the sky—disappeared—rose again above another point—again sank, and again rose above another of the columned peaks, and so on, until lost behind intervening trees.

Hastily mounting, Sir Alberic rode back to the Host ; eager and joyous to communicate tidings which were as eagerly and joyously received.

The rear had, by this, began to crowd upon the centre, and that again upon the van, in spite of the repeated cries of “ Halt, Banner ! ” these being disregarded in the general impatience to advance. But now, Esquires and Hobilers were dispatched along every line to give note of the discovered ambush ; and the King, the Marshal, and Constable took council for immediately dislodging the enemy.

It was determined that Gifford, Earl of Buckingham, and Sir Alberic du Coci, with a strong

detachment of men-at-arms and archers, should try the pass of the nearest fork of the hills upon the right ; and, by an attack in flank, either shut them between two fires, or drive them to open battle upon the plain. They formed accordingly, rode slowly, and in silence, through the hilly pass, and came suddenly upon " a plump of spears," the advanced guard of the enemy, whose main body and rear, a dense mass bristling with spears and bills, appeared stretching far north and west ; while the hidden van occupied the defile between the forest and the cliffs.

There was a loud, shrill cry, and then the shock of meeting coursers, of shivered lances and falling riders. Neither party, however, had definite advantage, and they merely fell back upon their respective Hosts ; the Royalists to increase their numbers at least before another attack in flank, and the Insurgents to report the discovery of their ambuscade ; advanced parties upon either side remaining almost within bow-shot.

Night, however, now drew on ; and it seemed agreed by both Powers to hold their several positions until morning, when the fortune of the day might be tried, either in pitched battle, if De Albemarle cared to leave his entrenchments,

or by a struggle in the defile, if he determined rather upon the defensive.

The rich twilight died away. There was no moon till a late hour, and only a faint starlight glimmered down upon the opposed Hosts. Both, therefore, prepared for battle at peep of dawn. Watch-fires were lit—and horses and men refreshed—and then all lay upon the cold ground in their armour; many chargers secured only by their reins bound to *misericordes* thrust into the sod, and the riders pillowed upon their shields, with arms laid ready to be snatched up at the first peal of the trumpet.

CHAPTER XIV.

“ Now the storm begins to lour,
(Haste, the loom of hell prepare,)
Iron sleet of arrowy shower
Hurtles in the darkened air.

Ere the ruddy sun be set,
Pikes must shiver, javelins sing,
Blade with clattering buckler meet,
Hauberk crash and helmet ring !

Horror covers all the heath,
Clouds of carnage blot the sun,
Sisters, weave the web of death !
Sisters, cease, the work is done.”

Gray.—“ *The Fatal Sisters.*”

BEFORE sunrise, all doubt as to the intentions of De Mowbray and De Albemarle was at an end. The vanguard and a considerable portion of their main body had defiled while it was yet dark from the wood ; and in a short time their whole host, about twenty-three thousand fighting men of all classes, appeared drawn out in form of battle.

This power was divided into three masses, or, as the phrase went, battles, each containing an almost equal number of men-at-arms, archers,

and infantry; the heavy-armed of the latter forming the centre ranks; the light-armed and the archery the front; and the cavalry, or men-at-arms, stationed behind both. The central division, however, was strengthened by a reserved corps of a thousand horse in its rear. It occupied also a rising ground secured from attack behind by trenches; while the right wing was flanked by the crags and brook; and the left by the hills and some hastily constructed ramparts of stakes and osier-hurdles.

The sun shone magnificently upon this triple host, which, from the perfect state of its equipment, made a very gallant and formidable show.

The Royal Army, a little superior in numbers, was also divided into three lines, but without intervals between them; the first, consisting, as did the enemy's, of archers and light-armed infantry, was under the leading of the Constable De Miles. The second, commanded by the redoubted giant, Montgomery, comprised the strongest and most heavily armed foot battalions, ranged in close order, their shields locked edge to edge. The cavalry, a mighty host of steel-clad warriors, under the King himself, formed the third line, and stretching beyond the infantry

right and left, served effectually to flank both wings. We should observe, indeed, that the superiority of the royal numbers was enhanced by its consisting chiefly of horse.

Mounted still upon his hackney, while a knight held ready the reins of his noble charger, the Monarch rode along his lines, and, by short and characteristic appeals, awoke the ardour of the troops for combat.

“God and St. George! hurl me this rebel-rout to Limbo lake! what makes the villains here? Are we not *King*? *their* King? the son of him who *was* their King? What would my father’s nephew with the crown of my father’s son? Now, by St. Luke’s face! he that gets him honour in this fight gets him riches to boot, and a king for his debtor! For I will make *this* day a feast in his remembrance! What, ho! who hath surveyed these traitors? What banners be those even now flung abroad in the van? Cousin of Norfolk, *thou* hast a quick eye for a far blazon.”

“In the main front,” answered Earl Bigod, “I see De Mowbray’s, the dragon with the crest and tongue of fire; and near, upon either hand, De Vesco’s eagle, and the twin leopards of De Humphreville. Upon the left flank are the triple

turrets of Reginald de Lacy; and, upon the right, the old wolf's head of Hugh-le-Loup."

"Stout traitors all!" said the King, "and, yonder—midmost of their second line? ha, gentle coz?"

"The banner," replied Norfolk, "is De Albe-marle's, a griffin crowned; but I take shame to tell your Grace the floating blazonry of the broad standard beyond—there are the *lions passant* of England in a royal shield!"

"Audacious villains!" cried Rufus; "and what rebel rags, I pray you, flutter along the wings?"

There was no answer; but Montgomery and Du Coci rode off towards either point, and returned speedily with intelligence.

"To horse, my liege," cried Sir Alberic; "if we set not upon them they will charge first! A thousand lances are in the rest—I see the banner of the wolf's head over the power of the Western Marches; and, as I live and breathe, there, too, is William de Aldery! I know him by the strange crested helm."

"He hath broken prison then," said the Monarch. "No matter. To thy stout lances, Du Coci! We will upon them! What! Shall we play the Christian King, and bid a herald cry pardon to such as rue their treason?"

"Upon my life, my Liege," said Bigod, "'twill not be listened to. Yonder villains are minded rather to thrust through and to cleave down, than to seek grace, even were it offered!"

"They will fight like fiends in legion!" cried Montgomery, "now—upon the left wing—I see the banner of Bernard Newmarch; and, on the right verge of their second battle, the soaring falcon of De Tunbridge!"

"Why! we will be-simirch Sir Ilbert's trappings," said Rufus. "My horse! my horse! St. George! St. Michael! my lance, I say! and battle-axe!"

And now, while the Monarch mounts his impatient charger and gives his last directions, we will glance at the opposed lines; the more so, having mentioned, as within them, the banner of De Tunbridge, of whose escape the reader has yet had only a doubtful hint. *There*, however, appeared the falcon-banner, and the highly-adorned, half-fantastic armour of the Knight of the Falcon; and there, indeed, did he make no petty figure; his immense wealth and territorial power enabling him to bring into the field a very considerable body of well appointed troops.

"By Heavens!" exclaimed De Albemarle, apart to De Mowbray, "I have evil thoughts of De Tunbridge—I like not this wild vow of

silence ; when he should speak as blythe as May, and as loud as December !——Why ! lo ye ! he rides like a thing of clay ! his very heart is dead within him !”

“ Peace !” said Northumberland, “ all is well. The glittering fool hath mettle in him when roused.”

“ Aye !” said De Albemarle, “ but roused will it never be for *this* day’s work ! I would to God he had been yet fast fettered in the New Castle, and any fat-brained squire of our array leading his power !”

“ If he blanch, or play false,” said Earl Robert, “ I will cleave him with my own battle-axe !”

“ I like it not !” continued De Albemarle. “ His squire tells but a doubtful tale, and much do I fear Sir Ilbert is bought and sold ! I will not trust him in the van of the fight !”

“ Why, we will shape pretence to hold him rearward,” replied De Mowbray, “ until better hearts and arms have stricken blows to shame him from this moping moodiness ! Leave him to me, I pray you. Who leads their horse ? yon vast body of men-at-arms, far stretching west and east beyond both flanks of foot ? their chargers are as black waves below, and their

plumes and pennons as white foam above! but my sight is thick and short."

"The King, himself, be sure," said Stephen, "I see his banner in its centre—himself yet rides in front of the archer-van—he upon the snow-white hackney. Look! he sends horsemen to peruse us! Montgomery one, by his huge bulk—they ride towards either wing——"

"Now, good my Liege," exclaimed De Mowbray, "give me the leading of this central host!"

"Take it! in the name of Him who gives victory!" cried De Albemarle, "and *thou*, brave Lupus," (as the Earl of Chester rode up at the moment in full panoply, attended by William de Aldery, Nigel of Halton, and his esquires——,) "right wing or left?—Choose, and away!"

"Choose *ye*, my Liege," answered Lupus, "for there are banners on both flanks that it will please me well to see the fangs of the Wolf tear from their staves!"

"Away, then, eastward!" said Stephen. "Be the right wing mine. God of battles!" he added, looking upward, "set before me our prime foe, Rufus himself, that with my own good lance I may win, full knightly and kingly, the sceptre for which we struggle!"

"Amen!" cried a portly Warrior behind, grasping a tremendous leaden maul, such as few modern divines, we fear, could heave up with their full strength; and having another most truculent-looking weapon, of the like skull-shattering order, slung at his saddle-bow; but without lance, sword, axe, dagger, or any sharp weapon whatever—

"Amen! amen! and, for mine own part, if I can tickle me Hugo de Montgomery's ear with this pretty feather, it shall content the meek modesty of a poor churchman's desires!"

"Truly, worthy Prior," said De Albemarle, "thou hast there a delicate riding wand! But what ails thee at bright steel, O thou of the church-militant?"

"Against the canon, my gracious Liege!" replied Baldwin, flourishing his club of Ascapart—"against the canon! It is not given unto us, that be men of peace, to put the blood of war upon the girdle that is about our loins! and, therefore, in meek humbleness of obedience, do I eschew the carnal weapon of bright steel!"

"Godly man!" exclaimed De Albemarle—"Thou say'st well! only it somewhat puzzles a sinful layman to guess how thou wilt knock out a score of men's brains and shed no blood!"

Howbeit, upon them, and make essay! We will pay pence to Peter, but Urban shall forgive thee!"

"To the charge, my Liege!" cried De Lacy, riding hastily up, "the ranks of the foe are marshalled; many a thousand arrows are under the belt, and there are lances lowering for career!"

"Command the reserved horse, brave Reginald, in our main battle's rear," said Stephen, "and so farewell! Farewell, too, noble Lupus! St. Hugh of Cluni strike with thee and thine! For *thee*, princely De Mowbray!" he added, as the others rode off, "Father, and Friend, and Councillor! let there be no farewell betwixt us! at *thy* glance such eagle-trust of victory sits upon my heart that it were scorn and mockery of the omen to name even the word farewell!"

"Away, my Liege!" answered Northumberland, "win or lose, we will fight this battle with twin hearts and souls! Thy spear in rest shall be my signal to bid the archers shoot!"

Thus saying, De Mowbray returned the steely grasp of De Albemarle, and the latter then rode to where his banner waved in front of the right wing.

Both Hosts were now marshalled—every

leader under his banner—every knight under his pennon—every man-at-arms with levelled lance—every bowman with arrow fitted; and there was a brief interval of dread and portentous silence.

Almost at the same instant, De Mowbray and Milo de Miles gave their respective signals—then trumpets pealed, and nakirs resounded—a cloud of arrows darkened heaven and earth, and a shout arose from both armies which seemed to rend the summer sky from welkin to welkin, and to shake hill and plain beneath it! It was the wild and fiend-like shout of defiance! soon to be followed by that of rage and agony; by the mingled roar of triumph, and of wrath, of fury, and despair!

It is not *our* province to detail the order and progress of combat with all the minutiae of tacticians, or the heavy formality of a bulletin; but rather, with eager yet trembling finger, to direct the eye of imagination, as from some shadowy eminence, upon the waves of conflict rolling, rushing, and breaking at its foot, as the conflicting tides of ocean and a vast river rush and break upon the strand that trembles at their conflux! To shew, through fearful vistas in the carnage-clouds that gather around, glimpses of the

havoc made far and wide beneath by the Rider of the Pale Horse, as he fills all bosoms with commutual rage to glut his fury! glimpses of the dark picture drawn by a Cambrian Bard,* “the gushing of blood—the weapons of the heroes with gore fast dropping—men surrounded with terror—the crimson gash upon the chieftain’s brow—biers with the dead and reddened men—a tumultuous rushing together—combatants striving in blood to the knees—and ravens feasting on human prey!”

The sun shone with a blinding splendour full in the faces of the Royalists; and in the deadly exchange of arrow-flights which began the struggle, they were, consequently, the greatest sufferers.”

“Upon them with lance and bill!” exclaimed De Miles—and his whole line charged, under a cope of whizzing shafts, full upon their shooters; each bowman discarding his first weapon, and grasping his bill or mallet; and the light horsemen that flanked them striving with their long spears to break the opposed phalanx, or with their axes to cut down the projecting stakes which defended its squares and columns.

* Llŵarch Hen.

So fierce was the in-burst that, upon many points, it proved successful, and the first line of the rebel centre and left wing were driven back upon the second. These, however, the heavy-armed battalions of foot, stood like rocks of adamant against the shock ; and would, perhaps, have cut the charging foe to pieces, had not Montgomery, marking the crisis with burning eye from afar, rushed with his corresponding heavy squadrons to support the almost defeated Constable, and so rendered the battle general along all the lines of infantry ; while the main squadrons of barbed horse on both sides seemed to await the issue—the discomfiture of one or other—before throwing their own tremendous power into the scale.

Long and terrible was the struggle, for, “ as Greek met Greek,” so the flower of English yeomanry was set in deadly array against itself ! The trumpet sent its shrilling voice afar, and the hollow beat of the nakir, or kettle-drum, resounded from host to host ; while shouts, and yells, and war-cries, and the shrieks of expiring horses, rose over all ; amidst the clash of blade and shield, the ringing of axe and brand upon helmets, and the crash of lance and pike upon corslet and steel cap !

At length, the terrors of De Mowbray's battle-axe, which made gaps of slaughter wherever it arose and fell ; and the wild fury of the savage Borderers ; and of the stubborn dalesmen of Rede, and Tyne, and Wear, rolled back the broken tide of conflict upon the royal front ! Their array was shattered, many were slain and wounded, banners and pennons, thrown to earth, and confusion spread along the ranks so rapidly that scarcely all the energy and desperation of the Marshal, De Miles, and Du Coci, availed to keep it from swelling into panic and utter rout.

They fell back, at last, with a heavy loss, amidst the exulting cheers and thrilling war-cries of the enemy.

"Now, by St. Luke's face !" shouted Rufus, whose soul panted within him for the charge, "they shake our columns ! they drive them to mid-field ! Darkness of Hell ! foot and horse upon both flanks wheel round to hem them in ! St. George ! St. Edward ! sound trumpets ! advance banner ! For thy life, De Baliol, ride to our cousin of Norfolk, and bid him charge upon their right wing, as though St. Michael were hurling Normandy upon England ! away ! Now, gallant Hearts ! my faithful Lieges ! my noble

Earls! my trusty Barons and Knights! upon them, in God's name and mine! King William to the rescue!"

And the fiery Monarch dashed the rowels into his charger, and with about six thousand of his noblest chivalry (better or braver the world in arms could not have produced!) rushed in thunder over the field; and fell, like the bolts of Heaven themselves, upon De Mowbray and De Albemarle, as the latter wheeled round in front to crush the already hard-pressed squadrons of the Marshal and the Constable!

The first fury of the charge seemed to defy the strength and courage of demi-gods! Down went banner and pennon—horse and man! And far into the gored and shaken ranks did Rufus and his princely nobles spur their mailed chargers, making a lane of dead and wounded with lance and sword, and mace, and battle-axe! the King himself used one of the latter weapons, his great strength and activity making its every blow fall like death's own hand. No helm or mail could resist its crashing and tremendous dint; and when the Monarch's eye fell upon De Albemarle, who, at some distance, fought with chivalrous gallantry, striking down every foe that dared the encounter, he cried his war-cry with fiercer

energy, and his blows descended more fast and terrible, to cleave a passage to the bosom of his rival.

Conspicuous by his daring, as by the royal banner, and by the crown upon his helmet-crest, Rufus was presently distinguished by De Albe-marle ; and that gallant adventurer, nothing loth to put the struggle at once to personal arbitrement, strove hard to cut a way for their meeting. But the strife was not yet to be so decided. Between them a dense mass of raging combatants still fought with Norman fury and desperation ; many with uncouth, but deadly weapons, called morgansternes and oncins, staves with spiked iron balls, and with hooked axes ; the latter making deadly incision through the mascles of the linked mail. The knights had broken their lances to fit them for close combat ; the men-at-arms and esquires followed in the surging wake of their lords, striving gallantly to “ win their spurs ” upon a stricken field ; and every banner and pennon became the nucleus of a burning orb of conflict—to tear down those proud insignia, or to preserve them flying, and to slay or succour their defenders, being the great objects of mutual fury. Day wore on—but hours were as moments with the combatants—the sun poured

down a more intolerable heat and lustre—thick clouds of dust rose upon every hand—louder and hoarser grew the cries of aid and rescue—the fierce thrust and the cleaving blow were dealt deadlier and faster. Horses reared and fell, and with their plunging hoofs made brief the anguish of fallen riders. The groans of the dying, and even the yells of those whose deep wounds crimsoned the feet of their trampers, were heard no longer, amidst shriller clarions and the deeper beat of the drum, “the thunder of the captains and the shouting!”

Although the severest brunt of the royal charge fell upon the insurgent right wing, goaded to it by the banner of De Albemarle, its fury extended along the whole of the central front as well. But there, De Mowbray, whose lines were flushed with advantage, and re-arranged for the coming storm behind a fresh body of archers, made the new assailants pay dear for every foot of ground they maintained. Arrows flew upon them “as if it snowed.” The knights and men-at-arms rushed in firm phalanx—the Welsh foot plunged their long knives into the bellies of the steeds; and, so great was the confidence inspired by De Mowbray’s presence, and almost superhuman

daring, that the eagle of victory seemed once more likely to sit upon his banner. He saw, however, that Stephen was pressed with increasing fury by the King, and, (knowing well the royal prowess,) feared the Earl's death or defeat, before succour could well be dispatched to him.

"Fly, good De Aldery!" he exclaimed. "Spur hard to the left wing—bring aid from Hugh-le-Loup, De Lacy or De Tunbridge!—Mark well whose banners are yet a-field."

The Knight gave rein and rowel to his steed; burst his way to rearward through the press, and vanished amidst the spears.—But he returned no more!

When the main royalist division of heavy cavalry first charged, before the Earl of Norfolk received the King's command, by Baliol, to throw his columns upon the left wing of the enemy, headed by Hugh Lupus, a great part of that division remained yet inactive. The archers, indeed, still poured their shafts in drifting volleys, but the chief squadrons of men-at-arms, and a large body of infantry were entirely out of action. Of these, both foot and horse, a great proportion formed the power of De Tunbridge, stationed by the jealousy of De Albemarle in the rear of that flank, with injunctions

to make no charge, or advance, without solicitation to that effect from one of the three great Earls. De Lacy, with his reserve of a thousand horse in the central rear, had like instructions, and awaited with burning impatience the summons which he trusted every moment would bring him to rush into the conflict. The Knight of the Falcon, on the contrary, seemed to preserve the moody coldness which from the first had rendered him suspected. The Squire who had escaped with him, stood, indeed, ready with charger, lance and axe; and others were hurrying to and from the van with intelligence; but, he still rode his hackney, and sent no couriers to any of the engaged leaders; seeming, in fact, intent only to observe De Lacy, whose squadron lay at a little distance upon his right.

At last came the arousing crisis!

Hugh-le-Loup heard the thunder of the royal cavalry; and, through the thick clouds of dust, caught sufficient glimpse of their fearful charge upon the centre and right wing. He sent a horseman at speed to bid De Lacy advance upon the ground he was himself about to quit—cried his war-cry, “St. George for the Western Wolf!” and, with the flower of the Palatinate rushed headlong upon the Earl of Norfolk,

whose squadrons, at that moment, had also galloped for the charge.

Fierce and loud was the shock, and many a lance was shattered, and many a rider thrown ; but the advantage lay manifestly with Lupus. He spurred his powerful horse full against Bigod, and hurled him senseless from the saddle ; a result so disheartening to the Royalists, that, after with great difficulty regaining their leader's body, they seemed rather to fight for life than victory.

But there was a disparity of numbers little anticipated.

" Now, by every saint and every fiend ! " cried Hugh-le-Loup, " yon treacherous villain, De Tunbridge, hath either fled the field, or joined the Tyrant ! Ride, ride, good Nigel ! for thy life ! and bid De Lacy with his fresh horse charge on yon flank ! My earldom to a knight's fee the day will then be ours ! "

Nigel obeyed, but his career was short. He saw the whole power of De Tunbridge, still in line, and still inactive, but with its front marshalled towards De Lacy. He saw the Falcon-leader in the war saddle, with lance in rest, and banner advanced. He heard a thrilling cry of onset, and then a loud exulting shout ; and in the next

instant, almost before he could wink twice, beheld the whole band of Reginald de Lacy scattered like hounds through which the stag charges when at bay; or, in the stronger language of the Prophet, like a rolling thing before the blast!

So fierce—so tremendous—so unlooked for, was the charge, that very many were driven pell-mell into the trenches cut for their security; and the Leader himself, taken, it must be confessed, at unawares, hardly escaped being hurried headlong amongst them. As for the amazed Nigel, equally stout of heart and thick of skull, he thought it decent and necessary to avenge the feat upon its hero; and, rushing on for the purpose, was rewarded by a blow that cleft him from the crown midway to the chin!

First paralysed with astonishment, and then burning with fury, back, like a demon for his prey, came the Baron of Newark for revenge.

“White-livered Popinjay!” he cried, half choked with rage, “treacherous kite! I will repay thee! I will teach thee, poor painted kestrel! to play the paltering haggard with Reginald de Lacy!”

“Black-hearted caitiff!” thundered the Knight of the Falcon, no longer either idle or mute, and

with a voice which the Baron well knew was not that of De Tunbridge, "*I will repay thee!* once for all, and with heaped hand! Dost thou not know me, slave of the great Devil?"

"The great Devil confound thee!" exclaimed De Lacy, reining back, himself greatly confounded! "Thou here! can it be possible?"

"I will teach thee to believe!" cried the Blue Knight, "*this* is not the cavern of Se-Blaca. *Here* thou canst not escape the penal scourge! I bless God thou hast no wings to fly from *Him!* from *me!* Robber and murderer! have at thee!"

And they closed in as fierce combat as ever rose from wrath and hatred betwixt man and man!

De Lacy was bold—determined—muscular. His antagonist was spare and slim. The Baron's heavy axe threatened with one blow to decide the strife. The Blue Knight wielded only the ordinary Norman sword; and yet none who had heard and looked upon the champions would have doubted the issue. In three minutes, De Lacy dropped heavily from the saddle with a deep wound betwixt the casque and gorget, the hood of mail beneath being no security against a blow so terrible as that which had fallen upon it.

"Oh, slay him not, Sir Knight!" exclaimed a Squire who saw the weapon point of the victor at his lord's throat; "take ransom, and spare life!"

"Not for the world's riches!" cried the disguised Knight; "This, *this!* for Constance de Mowbray!"

And as he spoke the last word, a deadly thrust accompanied it. One groan—one convulsive gasp—and the fierce spirit of Reginald de Lacy parted for ever! The death of their leader, and the shout of triumph which hailed it, completed the surprise and defeat of the rebel squadron of rescue. They fled for the most part without striking another blow; and, hurrying fieldward in the greatest disorder, communicated their panic to the forces of the left wing still engaged with Bigod, and which only struggled against superior foes in expectation of succour from the very men now flying past or amidst them in utter rout and confusion! Well and bravely until then had Hugh-le-Loup maintained the fight, and perhaps the lost reinforcement would have given him instant victory. *Now*, irremediable confusion spread along the lines; and when the Conqueror of De Lacy rushed upon them with his exulting troops,

fresh and fiery as morning eagles, every banner and pennon fell or fled. The Earl of Chester was himself unhorsed and abandoned in the shock; and all that remained of his division were either slain upon the spot or hurried out of the field in total defeat—pursued—cut down—trampled over by the unsparing foe!

A body of Royalists, both foot and horse, who had remained to guard the great standard, seeing the rout, gladly joined the pursuing squadron; and bore a sanguinary part in the chase of slaughter that ensued.

The victor-leader, however, knew or guessed that Fortune showed another aspect upon the centre and right wing of the foe. He gave up the pursuit to the new comers, wheeled round his whole force, and swept with unabated fury into the thickest of the conflict; where, by this, De Mowbray had once more broken the lines of Rufus, and cooped the raging Monarch within a narrow circle of his bravest chivalry, who thus threw themselves between him and the fate they well knew he would rush upon in his desperation. Once had he struck De Albemarle's horse dead beneath him, and once, with a mighty but glancing stroke, cloven the helmet crest of the rider, and stunned him to the earth; but the

whirlwind rush of Northumberland to Stephen's aid again turned the current of fortune, and of battle.

Full in the van of those who fought stoutest for the King, and *had* done so through all the struggle, fought Alberic du Coci. Backed by his trusty Nicholas, and the remnant of his free lances, he did not (to use the quaint language of Saxon minstrelsy) "doze in the war-saddle, or strike drowsily with dull hand!" Though pained and weakened by a spear-wound in the left side, the brave knight cried his war-cry cheerily, and struck down every assailant, until encountered by *one*, against whom no champion of the royal host had stood that day without dearly abying it.

It was De Mowbray upon his foaming charger, black from the spur to the crest with blood and dust, and still wielding the heavy war-axe as though the fight were but begun.

"Ha!" he exclaimed, "St. George! St. Oswyn! Thou art the dishonoured villain Du Coci, and my long debt of blood and vengeance shall now be paid!"

"Take back the 'dishonoured villain,'" cried the Knight, "back in thy rebellious teeth! But I am that Alberic du Coci who, in past years,

dubbed thee the false traitor thou hast this day well approved thyself!"

"And I," said the fierce Northumberland, "I am that Robert De Mowbray who swore that if ever again thy foot pressed English ground, two moons should not fill and wane ere a death-mass was chaunted for thy soul in Durham aisles! Now—*now* is the fulfilling hour! the cup of trembling is at thy lip! Drink, villain, and die!"

His charger made but *one* bound—his fatal axe but once swung aloft and descended—and the work of hatred was done! the debt of long-hoarded vengeance was discharged. Strength, skill—a heavy opposing mace—wrought meshes of double mail—were all idle—all as grass to the sickle, against that one terrible blow! With its single energy it cleft the right arm of the victim down from the very shoulder almost through the whole limb! and the brave, the generous—the kind—the true-hearted Du Coci fell with a mortal wound.

"St. George! St. Edward!" shouted the vindictive Conqueror, and raised his hand for a stroke to make assurance doubly sure—when, at the instant—amidst shouts of rage and triumph—the shock of a heavy charge drove upon him,

irresistibly, horse and man, friend and foe, victors and vanquished ; and swept together, in one surging hurley of confusion, the fighting and the fallen, the wounded and the flying, the living and the dead !

It was the charge of the Blue Knight—of him who had slain De Lacy and routed Hugh-le-Loup, and who was now swooping with like victorious wing upon the main-battle !

His well known voice thrilled upon the ear of De Mowbray, and not even when Du Coci fell had the eye of the dark Northern warrior flashed with a gloomier fire ! He rose high in the stirrup to look around for this next and fast-approaching victim ; and saw, to his surprise, a banner charged with the national cognizance of the Saxons, the aleirion, or martlet, streaming from the right towards the quarter of the Blue Knight's attack ; as if the forces marshalled beneath it were bent to repel his onset. De Mowbray exulted in the timely aid—spurred furiously to clear the press, and cried his war-cry again and again to cheer his disordered band ; but his voice was drowned by one louder and fiercer, thrilling over all the roar of the strife—

“ *The Avenger of the Saxons to the rescue !* ”

it thundered forth ; and then an arrow whizzed from a bow that never failed, and the great Earl fell back upon the arcon of the saddle, with the barbed point in his side, just where the plastron, or under corslet, ceased to protect it. A mist came over him. The battle reeled and swam—there was a fierce shout, and a cry of panic-terror, for the spirit of the rebels fell with their falling leader ; his bannerman dropped dead with a spear-thrust, and the instant the proud and far-cheering ensign of De Mowbray sank from its “pride of place,” all that remained of his late victorious troops fled in irretrievable rout and disorder, excepting here and there a little cluster of knightly and more determined spirits, that, side by side, or back to back, fought with the fury of despair, not for victory or life, but for revenge and honourable death.

One such heroic knot struggled for the shield and body of the fallen Earl ; but the victorious Raymond (for why affect longer mystery?) burst at last into the press, and saved once more (at least, for a little space) the little remaining life of Robert de Mowbray ! His charger’s hoof struck powerless the hand of De l’Epée, rising with a keen weapon to avenge his lord ; and

then, as the overpowered defenders fled, fell, or were taken, he sprang down and stooped over the body of the wounded.

He saw that the barbed shaft had pierced too deep to be withdrawn without occasioning instant death; and, amidst all his triumph, turned with a heavy heart from the pallid face of him whom he had once so honoured, loved, and revered. He gave charge for the body to be conveyed gently to the rear, and promised a high reward to whomsoever should first procure surgical aid.

Cries and sounds of fierce conflict from the right wing hurried him again to the saddle, but, as his foot pressed the stirrup, he felt the detaining grasp of Nicholas de L'Epée, (how changed from his once light-hearted aspect!) and, looking down where the squire pointed, saw the prostrate, helpless, expiring Du Coci; the seal of death upon his brow, and the turf beneath him a red swamp with his gore.

“Great God!” he exclaimed—flinging himself upon the earth beside the sufferer. “Is it indeed thus, brave Alberic? art thou sore stricken? Nay—speak to me gallant heart! how fares it with thee?”

“Cold,” answered the wounded Knight—“cold, dear Raymond—sick—feeble—dying!—but it

is well—passing well! better thus, a thousand times, than choked with the salt surf in yonder caverns. I die, like all my fathers, upon a well-stricken field, with the cry of victory for my death-hymn.”

“Oh, be of cheer!” said Raymond, although with a heavy consciousness that he spoke idly—
“thou shalt not die! we will have help—leechcraft—kindly tendance—I will nurse thee myself, as a mother would nurse her son!—arouse thee, Nicholas! for shame!” (he was holding water in a steel cap to his master’s lip, and shedding tears into it as fast as rain-drops fall!)
“Arouse thee, and prepare a litter!”

“A bier—a bier—” said the dying man, feebler and feebler; and his head dropped upon the bosom that strove to solace him. Raymond took the cold, powerless hand, and pressed it with poignant anguish—his heart sickened—his eyes gushed over with bitter tears.

Du Coci rallied a little once more. Faintly returning the pressure of his friend’s grasp, he murmured in low tones;—

“I am sped. The broken lance is broken for ever. It’s last splinter is hearth-fuel!—Tell me, Raymond—how goes the fight? how fares De Mowbray?”

"Sped too," replied Cœur d'Acier, "defeated—wounded—dying—a day of life is his best boast!—"

The Knight started convulsively, and seemed striving to rise. His eye was fixed. A little foam came to his lips, and, as they muttered something indistinctly, Raymond bent his ear close, and caught a few broken words—

"In Durham—holy Father!—Durham—a death-mass—he swore it—benedicite!"

They were his last accents. His head dropped as he uttered them; and, when Raymond again raised it, the gallant spirit was gone for ever!—

Let us quit this scene of individual death, and, allowing a little interval of renewed slaughter to elapse, "look, once more, ere we leave this specular mount," over the field of battle. It is covered with dead and dying—with abandoned arms and ensigns—with groups of flying wretches who have no hope but to save life—of savage pursuers who have no wish but to destroy it! Every column of the rebels is now broken and scattered. All the chivalrous daring of De Albemarle being in vain against the royal fury, when the banner of De Mowbray, like an extinguished beacon in a storm, sank from before them; and the cham-

pion who had first turned the fortunes of the day made his third and last charge upon their already wavering columns.

North, west, east, and south—to the towers of Bamborough—to the caverns of the sea-beach—to the wilds of Redesdale—to Tynemouth, and the forests of Tyne and Wear, the scattered wreck hurried as fast as wearied steeds, or their own wearied steps, could bear them! Where now are the arrayed squadrons, and the fiery leaders, and the proud hopes, and the fierce energies of the morning? Gone, with its mists and dews! drowned in gore, or quenched in despairing flight!

“Ambition, half convicted of her folly,
Hangs down the head, and reddens at the tale!”

Yon little cloud of dust rolling southward, with a few glimmerings of steel breaking through it, tracks the flying courser of De Albemarle himself, spurring, with a little remnant of his power, for Tynemouth. When all was lost, (after Raymond's last charge,) the would-be monarch flung the reins over his charger's neck, grasped his sword with both hands, and (not unworthy in spirit of a martial kingdom) was rushing into the thickest of the fight for revenge and death; but Hugh-le-Loup, unwounded and remounted,

although far behind his own routed columns, crossed the path of the Earl, seized the abandoned bridle, and hurried him from the field ; heedless in what direction, reckless of life, and seeing nothing but

“ Black-ravenous Ruin, with her sail-stretched wings ! ”

We snatch a glimpse of the conquerors—at a late hour, when wearied with pursuit and slaughter, and when the trumpet of recall had sounded—and then gladly close the blood-stained pages of battle.

“ Now, by the Mother of Heaven ! ” exclaimed Rufus, “ if Ilbert de Tunbridge hath indeed stricken this blow, he hath fed on strange meats these evil days—he is the serpent that hath eaten a serpent, and so sprung to a dragon ! ”

“ He slew De Lacy with one mighty blow,” observed a Baron who stood near.

“ I saw him scatter De Mowbray’s host as the wind scatters stubble,” said De Miles.

“ Aye, marry,” said Montgomery ; “ but he had wit to time it when a cloth-yard shaft was in Earl Robert’s breast.”

“ Not so, by St. Mary ! ” cried another, “ he charged ere the shaft sped, and was then within lance-length of the Rebel Earl.”

"Never again Rebel or Earl," said the King ;
"but say—who hath news of the Traitor?"

"I, my Liege," said De Miles, "both fair and foul. He was prisoner to De Tunbridge, but, while conveying to the rear, rescued by the burly Prior of Tynemouth."

"A curse upon that meddling Book-a-bosom, with his huge mallet !" said Montgomery, "twice did he rally a band of beaten villains, crying aloud, in God's name, to fight like Saul and Jonathan, and to smite us hip and thigh, even from the rising to the going down of the sun."

"A gory twilight hath *their* sun-down !" said the King ; "and I will flay me the priest alive, to be a terror henceforth to all villanous peel-pates that betake them to club-law rather than the canon. But, ho ! by St. Luke's face, stand apart ! here, with a thousand laurels, comes the champion of the day, the marvellously changed De Tunbridge !"

Slowly riding up, the exhausted Raymond dropped, rather than alighted, from his foundering charger—knelt at the royal foot—removed the falcon-crested helmet, and throwing back the hood of mail, solved in one moment the whole enigma of poor Sir Ilbert's heroism.

Of those that, with eyes of amazement, wit-

nessed the transformation, some looked pale with envy—some black with malice—and the Red King himself ten times redder than usual with surprise and pleasure!

“Pardon, my gracious Liege,” said Raymond, “a pardon, if I have done well, for Ilbert de Tunbridge; with whose armour, banner, and forces, and by his own freely-accorded will, I have thus dared to play the masquer, and strike this blow for my royal Liege.”

“And, in the fiend’s name—” said Rufus, “where lies the gallant himself?”

“Fast in the dungeons of the New Castle; hostage that every leader of his power should obey *his* signet upon *my* hand. With that, and his trusted squire, and in his gay harness, I rode to the rebel-camp, pleaded a vow to my saint for needful silence, and passed, in very deed, with their whole host, for Ilbert de Tunbridge.”

“With a whole Host, and a whole Realm,” answered the King, “Thou shalt pass for a better man—better a thousand fold! Give me thine hand, Sir Varlet of many names and shapes! and, to the boot of Steel-Heart and Stormed Castle, arise Raymond de Mandeville, Earl of Essex! son of that Geoffrey de Mandeville who fought bravest of the brave at Hastings!

Hugo of Shrewsbury, our good and faithful Marshal, know this gallant for thy fellow Peer ; cut square his pennon with thine own hand, and look well that his title hath fair blazon. Now bid our Heralds ride over the field, and take we charitable thought for the dead—the dying—and the groaning wounded who may yet live. Bring me a written file of the chief dead—(ah ! brave Du Coci !)—blow trumpet yet again ! a tucket of recall. Down banner, and up tent ! here will we sup to night ; for, laud be to God and my stout Lieges ! I have this day won a brave field against a stubborn foe ! Up tent ! up tent ! By St. Luke's face, we will drink joy and health to Raymond, Earl of Essex ; and the curse of the churlish heart upon whoso gainsays his worthiness !”

CHAPTER XV.

CONCLUSION.

“———, no more of this, so God you blesse,
Your tale annoyeth all this companie!”

Chaucer.

Exeunt Omnes !

THE Battle we have attempted to describe* was decisive, not only of the political struggle which caused it, but of the fortunes of all those for whom we have endeavoured to awaken interest or sympathy.

Nearly eight thousand of the rebel army lay dead upon the field, besides the wounded, of whom a great proportion had mortal hurts ; and the slaughter during the flight was very great. Of the remainder, though some fled to the castles still garrisoned for De Albemarle, the greater number was scattered over the kingdom ;

* It is a singular fact, and shameful to the monkish scribblers, that no History extant contains any account or even mention of this great Battle ! we supply the hiatus now, for the first time, upon the sole authority of the “Boke of Bebbanburgh.”

every man, in his despair and confusion, shifting as he best might for himself.

The body of De Lacy was found just as he had fallen under the sword of Raymond; and, being thrown into the trenches behind, had brief and unhonoured burial with the promiscuous dead.

" By his grave, dishonour shall sit,
Ever, O ever !
Blessing shall hallow it,
Never, O never !"

Not far remote, upon the ground occupied by the left wing, De Aldery was also recognised, after a pile of dead had been dragged from above him; his noble features retaining to the last that deep melancholy which seemed now to have been prophetic of his early doom.*

The remains of Du Coci had been cared for by his trusty Nicholas; a mourner as deep and true, with all his levity, as ever wrapped himself in the inky cloke of more ostentatious sorrow. It was the first task of the Earl of Essex, immediately after recall from pursuit, and before either sleep or food refreshed him, to have the

* "Boke of Bebbanburgh." Vulgar Historians give another account of De Aldery's death.

body brought to his own tent, that the wolf, the vulture, and the raven might gorge upon meaner fare. When the Host was next morning divided into two bodies, one for the reduction of the more southern castles, Durham and Tynemouth; and the other, for the sieges of Alnwick and Bamborough; Raymond, upon being appointed to command the former, carried with him the relics of his friend, trusting to inter them in hallowed ground in one or other of the places to be reduced. This, as Alnwick and Durham both surrendered upon the first summons, he accomplished in the cathedral of the latter city; and the visitor who now wanders where "Saxon-Eadmer's towers" look down, in monastic pomp, from their wooded throne, upon the lovely Wear girdling their base, may, perhaps, heighten an evening mood of gentle enthusiasm, by remembering, in his cloistered walk, that, amidst the nameless graves of the forgotten dead beneath, he paces, somewhere, over that which holds the shrunk ashes of "the brave, the generous, the true-hearted Alberic du Coci!"

Earl Raymond then marched to Tynemouth, and sat down before the fortress stubbornly defended by the Prior; as upon the northern

frontier, Bamborough was by Matilda. To the Monarch, however, as to our readers, De Mowbray was the great personal object in the first, and Constance in the latter.

The fate of Hugh-le-Loup, as it was comparatively gentle, may soon be told. He was taken in the pursuit, and, upon submission to the Monarch, and payment of three thousand marks as a fine, returned at once to his allegiance and to his western fastnesses, "a sadder and a wiser man."

De Albemarle, hurried off the field, as we have described, when the battle was totally lost, escaped, during their flight, by sheer desperation of combat, from the band of Royalists that made prisoner the less desperate and less active Earl of Chester. Hard chased by his pursuers, the unfortunate Stephen fled to the sea-shore, secreted himself for a day and a night amidst its caverns, and, at last, reached Tynemouth in a fishing boat, haggard with toil, with loss of blood, with thirst, hunger, and ruined hope.

In the castled monastery, (no longer

"Within, a palace, though without, a fort,")

he found De Mowbray upon his death pallet, still breathing the difficult breath of parting

life ; but how changed from the haughty noble—the stately courtier—the dreaded warrior, who, but two days before, could wield half the energies of an empire, and strike a fearful, though unavailing blow, against the most warlike Monarch in Europe !

What De Albemarle, however, beheld and heard, he shall himself relate, when, upon the following night, favoured by storm and darkness, he eluded the watch and ward of both besieging Hosts, and suddenly presented himself before Matilda at Bamborough.

“ Fallen Prince ! ” she exclaimed, “ if it be not a mockery to call thee even *that*,—where is my lord ? How fares it with De Mowbray ? ”

“ Ill ! never worse with mortal man ! sick—helpless—dying in his beleaguered castle. His sun is set ! ”

“ And thou,” said the Countess, her cheek turning deadly pale, “ why art *thou* here ? ”

“ To bid thee,” answered Stephen gloomily, “ spare slaughter that avails not—yield the castle—make peace with Rufus ! ”

“ Yield ! ” exclaimed the fiery Matilda, “ yield ! Saints of Heaven ! when ? wherefore ? Tell me *that*—who gives command ? Is't *thou*, spiritless fugitive ? ”

“Insulting woman! No!” replied the Earl, “nor here, nor upon other spot of English ground, hath Stephen de Albemarle now a voice of command! I go—if my tyrant cousin seize not upon me—to the Holy Land, to strive for the sepulchre of Christ. Such is, at last, the only warfare that would not demean him who has thus battled for a kingdom. I nor command, nor counsel thee to yield this castle. It is the hest of De Mowbray—wilt thou obey it!”

“When its towers are sand-heaps!” said Matilda; “when the besieging Host pours through the breach we cannot man—when famine hath stripped us to the skeleton-ghosts of defenders—*then* shall Rufus of England call Bamborough his—but not *till then*, unless it be mine to name at pleasure the terms of yielding.”

“This,” said Stephen, “is the madness of obstinacy, and not heroic firmness. What terms canst thou demand that he, the flushed conqueror, will deign to grant?”

“Full pardon for De Mowbray—his wealth—his rank—his power—his friends unscathed—these, or defiance to the death! There was a Countess once, Emma de Guader, that from the walls of Norwich defied the father of this tyrant, until his pride was quelled, and, with spread

banner, the defending host passed from its towers, whither they listed. *Her* spirit is mine. So will I keep *these* towers! their walls shall be my couch—my prison—my grave! or I will have pledge from the King of life and fortune for my lord.”

“For thy Lord’s life,” said the Earl, “make plea with the King of kings, or not beyond the dragging of twelve wretched hours will it endure! I tell thee, Lady, if thou wouldst look upon him alive, fly with me even now, under ’vantage of this stormy darkness, to Tyne-mouth—there gaze upon the wreck that *was* De Mowbray! his mail changed for a Benedictine gown—his helmet for a hood—his hauberk for a scapulaire—his lance and shield for a missal and a breviary. Gaze upon *all this*, and then strive or yield as ye list.”

Matilda clasped her brow with both hands, like one whose every mental faculty is stunned by an intolerable blow!

The picture of De Mowbray’s degradation, from the hero to the monk, appeared to her ardent and tameless spirit, so dreadful—so revolting, that it was as if shame and obloquy had fallen heavily upon *her* also, until, by a burst of passionate invective, she had vindicated, to her-

self, as well as to De Albemarle, her exemption from such a blot.

“Great God !” she exclaimed, “did I for *this* link heart and hand with one whose life and fortunes trembled upon a cast ? to see him, when the stake is lost, lose with it all pride of heart and will—all manly wish or thought to do or dare ! O Heaven ! O Earth ! a thing of books and beads—of stripes and penance ! The warrior and the prince sunk—humbled—abased to the whining monk ! Go ! thou that hast yet some sparkle of knightly fire, take comfort to the fallen—such comfort as Matilda de Aquila can send to the *Monk* de Mowbray ! Take him that puling thing, his nun-like daughter, meeter for a cloister than the throne thy folly had shared with her ! Bid him, to *her* care confide his shameful sorrows—upon *her* sickly spirit pour out his own, in kindred feebleness ! For never more upon earth shall he behold the *nobler* woman, whom, by this monstrous self-abasement, he hath wronged and ruined ! O ! how unlike, in his priestly garb, *that* Earl of Northumberland, who, when sickness wasted him, tore the quouif from his brow—the nursing-vesture from his limbs, and, in steel harness, hauberk and helm, and plastron ; with shield and lance in his grasp,

and his spread banner above him—died like the hero of a hundred fields; full knightly, full nobly! I tell thee, Stephen of Albemarle! I had rather have been the widow of that Saxon, buried alive in his grave, than lived the wedded wife of De Mowbray, to be thus shamed and shunned!”

The indomitable Matilda kept her word. She dismissed Constance with De Albemarle, through a secret postern in the seaward battlements—while yet favoured by night and storm. She held out the castle against all the power and threats of Rufus. She never again looked upon the fallen De Mowbray.

We leave the Monarch to build his fort of Malvoisin against Bamborough; and once more change the scene to Tynemouth, closely invested by Earl Raymond.

It was night, in the magnificent church of the monastery—another night of raging blast and driving rain, with the added terrors of lightning and loud thunder; the intervals of whose turret-rocking peals were filled by the scarce feebler roar of ocean, breaking tremendously below, and sending its spray over the highest towers.

The rite called the *Nocturnal* was closed, but

a little group of varied figures glimmered in the beam of the tapers that lit the tomb of King Malcolm and his son, slain near Alnwick, by De Mowbray. *That* De Mowbray, the conqueror of a king—the terror of two realms, is the ghastly figure recumbent upon the marble slab below, wrapped in the black vestments of a Benedictine, and with the seal of death upon his brow ! Look, Moralizer upon human vanity ! look upon *that* tomb, and upon him for whom a tomb now gapes ; and cry with the Northern Minstrel—

“ Oh ! fading honours of the dead !
Oh ! high ambition lowly laid ! ”

Kneeling upon the cold floor, chafing the colder hands of the dying—stooping over him, like a pitying seraph, to wipe the clammy brow, and catch the feebly-whispered word—need we say *that* form of bending loveliness is Constance de Mowbray ? The armed figure at her side is De Albemarle ; and, near him, extending a crucifix, the Prior kneels, to bid peace be to the parting spirit.

Hours wore away over the melancholy group that still kept place and sorrow, while the sufferer still drew his miserable breath.

Sudden—far-thrilling above the roar of the storm, they heard a cry—a shout ! and then the

voice of trumpets and nakirs, and screams and yells, and a hundred mingled sounds of rage and terror, and conflict ! The besiegers had surprised a tower while the storm raged fiercest. De Albemarle, sword in hand, shot along the aisles, but was met by Elfin Puckfist, wild with terror, and pointing distractedly to the thick gloom of the portal arch—then came a gush of torch-light, and a warrior at the head of a strong band of men-at-arms broke into the chancel :—It was Raymond.—Stephen rushed upon him ; dealt a blow which shivered his own weapon in his grasp, and then stood defenceless, at the mercy of his uninjured foe.

“ Strike not ! nor advance ! ” exclaimed Essex to his followers—then, to De Albemarle—

“ Against *thy* life I have no weapon—nor bar against thy freedom ! Fly, whither thou wilt, —yet lead me first to De Mowbray—ah ! noble Earl ! ”—and, throwing himself beside the dying man, he cast but one glance upon his pallid face, and buried his own in his mailed hands.

The lamp of life lit up De Mowbray’s spirit with an expiring flash. He raised himself in the arms of Constance, and, as she hung over him, conjured her to take an oath for the peace of his parting soul, ere his cold ear was deaf for

ever. She gave solemn promise to comply—and then, with a voice such as might have issued from the tomb above, Earl Robert worded for her repetition a form of terrible imprecation upon her head, *if ever Constance de Mowbray gave her hand in marriage to a vassal of the Tyrant William!*

“Oh, Constance! swear not!” exclaimed Raymond—his sympathy for the dying yielding to alarmed affection, and to so terrible a blow at his own dearest hopes. But it availed not. She cast upon him a heart-renouncing look of agony, and, holding up her Father’s bloodless hands during the sacrifice, gasped out the fearful oath.

The young Earl bent to the earth under the infliction; and was only roused by a quick and bitter sob from his fellow-victim. He looked up—De Mowbray was dead on the chancel floor.*

That night parted for ever Raymond, De Albemarle, and Constance.

For the latter a royal order quickly arrived,

* “*Boke of Bebbanburg.*” The ignorant monks, followed by Hume and others, give other and various accounts. Some say that the Earl died a prisoner in Windsor Castle—some a shaven monk in the Abbey of St. Albans. We cannot doubt our own authority.

and was as quickly obeyed, that she should set out for the Convent of Nunna Mynstre, and await in its dim solitudes the Monarch's further commands.

The Earl of Essex kept faith with his fallen rival. He led him by the private postern down to Prior's Haven, and saw him, accompanied only by his faithful Dwarf, embark upon a stormy sea, from a kingdom which he had shaken to its very centre.

Soon after Raymond learned the safe arrival of the vessel in a Flemish port; but nothing more of De Albemarle, until his own steps were upon a far-foreign strand; until, in short, availing him of the King's reluctant license, immediately after the fall of Bamborough, and the consequent extinction of the last spark of rebellion, he had himself bade a long farewell to Britain.

With Nicholas de L'Epée as his chief squire, he joined the crusaders under Robert of Normandy, and strove, in the whirl of battle, to drown the bitter remembrance of Constance and of his ruined hopes. It was then that he heard of Stephen de Albemarle as fighting gallantly under the banner of King Philip, and likely, in the fields of the Holy Land, to lay the founda-

tions of a better kingdom than any less sacred warfare could have won for him in Europe.

Meanwhile years rolled away, and Constance (whom, to the surprise of many, the King never molested with threats of any alliance, although he forbade her to take the vows), hid her loveliness under the veil, and her nearly broken heart in the silence of a cloister. Sometimes, even to the secluded cells of Nunna Mynstre, the name of Raymond Earl of Essex came linked with many a eulogium upon his chivalrous conduct and lofty and generous nature. But, at last, rumour itself died away; and only sad conjecture remained, when the Lady Abbess, more bigoted than ever, spoke of some great victory won by the army of God over the usurping Moslems.

We have now brought the structure of our Drama to that point where the key-stone alone is wanting, and, before briefly supplying it, must again premise the lapse of several years from the period of De Mowbray's death.

As the steed to its starting post—as the hare to its form—as the mariner to his port—as the

streams of Calypso's Isle, back, after many windings, to their source,—we return to Hampshire—to the bosky wilds of “Ytene”—to the leafy solitudes of “Boldre-Wood.”

Jerusalem had fallen to the Crusaders. Many of these had hurried back to their western homes, and in the forest-glades where our *last scene* opens, a Red-Cross Knight was riding pensively upon his return, attended only by a single squire; his retainers, of other grade, who had escaped disease and the scimitar in Palestine, being yet in a foreign port.

The golden eye of Morning had opened broad and bright upon the Travellers, and darting through many a lovely vista, gave emerald brilliance to the dewy sward and mosses upon their path; tinged with hues of fiery splendour the stems of oak, and elm, and beech; and lit up with autumnal glory their waving masses of foliage. There was a laughing joyousness over all the woodland, and the few sounds that were heard, seemed all in jocund accordance with its aspect; the crowing of chanticleer from distant hamlets, the murmur of insect myriads, the song of the soaring lark, and last, not least, the varied sounds of *the chase*; the cheering of hound and courser, and the merry notes of the horn.

“St. Hubert!” exclaimed the Knight, “either there be bold outlaws in these woods, since thou and I last rode in them, good Nicholas, or King William himself rides fast and far this merry morning, in the wake of a gallant stag!”

Just as he spoke, a gallant stag indeed bounded past them down a cross glade of the forest; a greyhound followed in full career, and then a rider, whom the Earl of Essex immediately recognised as Sir Walter Tyrrell of Pontoise, a zealous huntsman, and a noted hero of bow-craft in that primal day.

Earl Raymond and his squire drew bridle to mark who followed. The stag, doubling almost at the instant, swept again across their path, while a horseman, superbly mounted and equipped, and whose form, complexion and voice, there was no mistaking, dashed over a thicket, and, leaping from the saddle, fitted an arrow to his bow with surprising celerity. Just then, a shaft whizzed from another point, and, glancing from a tree, struck—neither a stag nor a king, but simply the green sward it fell upon.

“Ha! by St. Luke’s face!” cried the dismounted Rufus, and discharged *his* arrow with unerring precision; but, at the very moment, *another*, with aim still more deadly, came from

an unseen shooter behind, and pierced him to the heart !

“ Saints of Heaven !” cried Raymond, leaping from his saddle, as the body dropped near him, without an effort, a struggle, or a groan, “ the King is slain !”

“ Not by *my* shaft, I call God to witness,”* cried the terrified Knight of Pontoise, bursting into the path and lifting his own harmless missile in attestation, and then throwing himself beside the luckless Monarch, who was indeed quite dead, with the arrow nearly through his whole body.

There was a rustling stir amongst the trees behind, and a sound resembling hoarse laughter, half-suppressed, followed by the beating of horse’s hoofs.

A light broke upon Essex and his Squire——

“ To horse and chase !” cried the former, and each springing to his saddle, darted into head-long pursuit ; De l’Epée taking a path which promised career of *interception* by the cross-glades, and the Earl himself following that which brought him speedily in the traces of the fugitive.

The latter, driven to bay, drew bridle in mid-

* Boke of Bebbanburg.

flight—fitted an arrow to his bow, and shot it with unfailing skill at his pursuer. Good cause had Raymond to bless the “cunning work” of the Milanese armourers, when the long keen shaft struck fairly through the linked hauberk to the steel corslet beneath, with a force which nothing but solid and well-wrought plate could have resisted! But it *was* resisted, and before the archer could make second trial, his enemy flung upon him (with the precision and dexterity of long practice against the Saracens) a mace of iron, that struck him from the saddle without power to rise or resist further.

“Thou Saxon devil! thou murderous caitiff!” cried the furious Raymond, his foot upon the breast, and his keen sword at the throat of the fallen, “long years have not saved thee from my commissioned hand—my treasured vengeance! Behold the hour! the minute! and the weapon! look up! ’tis I! Raymond de Mandeville!”

Se-Blaca looked upward with a scowl and glare of inextinguishable hatred; only muttering, betwixt his grinded teeth,

“Accursed! accursed! oh! that I had stabbed or strangled thee at Marston! But *let* my hour come!” he added in other tones, “I have wrought out my mission in all save *thee*—I have avenged

a thousand and a thousand wrongs ! Rejoice ! children of the fallen race ! Rejoice, Saxons ! your Tyrant is no more !—*this* hand—the hand of a Saxon, hath destroyed him !”

“And *this*,” said Raymond, “the hand of a Norman, shall avenge him—thus !”

He plunged the sword into the wretch’s throat, and then, turning immediately, rode back to the royal corpse, leaving to beasts and birds that of the long-dreaded and far-famed Avenger of the Saxons, Wolfsic-se-Blaca !

Raymond found the body of “the Red King,” deserted ; Sir Walter Tyrrell, with little trust in his innocence, having, as every body knows,* “put spurs to his horse—hastened to the sea-shore—embarked for France, and joined a body of the crusaders.”

It remained only for the Earl and his Squire to hurry on to Winchester, and obtain befitting conveyance of the dead ; but, before reaching the White City, not only was their object anticipated, by some poor charcoal-burners, who flung the body into their cart, after stripping it naked, but Raymond encountered a party of the royal

* But (as every body, perhaps, does *not* know) protesting vehemently afterwards, with solemn oath, to the Abbot Suger, that he had no hand, even accidentally, in the death of Rufus.

hunters, amongst whom was Prince Henry, surnamed Beauclerk, and who, upon receiving the very welcome news, soon found other and more important missions for the Earl of Essex than the obsequies of a dead king.

And now, why should we play the "strong tedious talkers," and lengthen out a narrative, of which the crowning event may readily be guessed :—

Who does not immediately perceive, that Raymond Earl of Essex was no longer "*a vassal of the Tyrant William?*" that Constance de Mowbray was therefore no longer bound by a cruel vow to waste her youth and beauty in a convent, when the noble, the brave, the generous and virtuous object of her first and only love, esteemed and favoured by the new Monarch, threw himself imploringly at her foot?

They were united soon after, in the Ealden Mynstre of the White City. Archbishop Anselm, recalled from unmerited exile, performed the holy rite; the *clerkely* King acted himself as sponsor to the Bride, and Sir Nicholas de L'Epée graced the ceremonial in all the virgin glories of new silk baldric and *gilded spurs*. It was a festal day throughout all Winchester. Even Jodesac *cum Barbâ*, "rejoiced and was

exceeding glad !” and gifted the bridal pair with caskets of such jewellery as might have blazed with admiration upon the nuptial garbs of Soldans and Sultanas. Lastly, the holiday-keeping multitude flung up their caps, and drank treble healths, and swore by more saints than any calendar has brought down to us, that never had Bride so lovely, or Bridegroom so noble, passed from the portal arch of Ealden Mynstre !

Our remaining actors, whose fate we have not yet related, may now soon be disposed of.—

De Tunbridge, pardoned by Rufus, at Raymond’s solicitation, continued from that time a loyal subject; and, through all the reign of Henry, hawked and hunted with more zest, and dressed and danced with more coxcombical gallantry than ever.

Montgomery, the grim Marshal, fell like his late master, by an arrow, but it was upon the battle field, while bravely defending the Isle of Anglesea against Magnus, King of Norway, who also fell in the struggle.

Flambard, the fierce and facetious Minister of Rufus, was rewarded by that King’s grateful successor, Henry, with a pension of two shillings per day, in the solitude of a strong prison. He contrived to break from this well-deserved incar-

ceration, but it was only to perish in greater misery.

Matilda, the lion-hearted, met at last with her match. She married Nigel de Albini, to whom Henry had given all the lands of De Mowbray, and who, it appears, took the freedom, one pleasant evening, to shut up his gentle Countess in a certain grim tower, grated, walled and moated, "conform;" from whence it was never known either that she had the wit to escape, or how the fierce spirit endured a doom so galling and so wretched.

And now, when we have said, in good old story-telling wise, that the Earl and Countess of Essex lived long and happily, and bequeathed to their country a line of gallant Nobles, surely, we may take leave of our kind readers, in the full spirit of Spenser's cheering philosophy—

"After long storms and tempests overblown,
The Sun, at length, his joyous face doth clear,
So, whenas Fortune all her spite hath shown,
Some blissful hours at last must needs appear!"

THE END.

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